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World Review

Incorporating Review of Reviews

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NEW POEMS: by
Muriel Spark; Wrey Gardiner; Lynette Roberts

BOOK REVIEWS by:
Christopher Hollis; Max Beloff; H. S. Deighton; Henry Baerlein; P. M. Fitzgerald; Stevie Smith; Neill Fisher

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INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ARTS

17–18 Dover Street, W.1 Gro. 6186

PICASSO

From 11 October to 21 November there will be a retrospective exhibition of drawings by Picasso at the I.C.A. Gallery.

SOIRÉE

A Soirée will be held at the Tate Gallery on 30 October on the occasion of the opening of the exhibition of paintings by Edvard Munch.

LECTURERS during October will include the French poet Paul Eluard, Professor Smigielski who will speak on the exhibition 'London, An Adventure in Town Planning' and A. D. B. Sylvester on 'Cubism, Klee and Architecture'.

Other activities will include recitals of contemporary music, discussions, film programmes and readings of plays and poems,

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Victoria and Albert Museum

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The European collections are mostly of Post-Classical art, from Early Christian times to the 19th century.

The Museum also includes the National Art Library (books and photographs on Art and allied subjects); the National Collections of Post-Classical Sculpture, of British Miniatures, and of Water-Colours; and the National Lantern Slide Loan Collection.

The Museum Galleries, for the first time in their history, are now being rearranged in two distinct, but equally important, groups. The *Primary Collections* (specially arranged in newly decorated galleries and mostly on the ground floor) will show the visitor a connected series of galleries in which masterpieces of all the arts are brought together by style, period or nationality, i.e., Early Mediaeval; Gothic; Late Gothic and Northern Renaissance; Italian Renaissance; English 1500-1850; Continental, 1570-1825, Islamic; Far East; Indian (in the Indian Section). The *Secondary* or *Study Collections*, are arranged according to the material or class of object.

*

The Museum also administers Ham House and the Bethnal Green Museum.

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Letters and Points

OUSPENSKY AND GURDJIEFF

SIR,

The comments of Dr. Stopes do not surprise me. Nothing is easier than to tear out a few extracts from an author's work and use them to ridicule his doctrine. Ouspensky's system is very complex and closely knit. It demands not only a certain scientific preparation but also an open mind; but to those who take the trouble to study the whole of it, it is utterly convincing. I am old enough to remember that when, in the twenties, Einstein first published his principles of Relativity, many 'learned' people called it 'balderdash'. It has always been the fate of original and revolutionary thinkers to be decried by the philistine and the wilfully blind as cranks or madmen. Miss Stopes's letter merely proves once again that *plus ça change . . .*

ROM LANDAU

TWO OPINIONS ON WORLD REVIEW

SIR,

Having recently looked through some copies of your *World Review* I feel that, despite what the Editor of the now extinct *Penguin New Writing* may say, you represent one of the last outposts of literature in magazine form.

H. ARVAY,
Tel Aviv

SIR,

I must register my disappointment at what can only be described as degeneration of the magazine. High-brow stuffs, heavy and almost indigestible, are now regularly dished out to the readers.

The great decline was forcibly brought home to me when I re-read a back number (October 1946). By Golly! It is worth its price in gold. Can it be said that the numbers from January 1951 to date are worth their price in copper?

OLATUNDE BALOGUN,
Aba Nigeria

ABSTRACT ART

No one, I think, could assent that abstract painting with its endless dried kidney array has progressed at all in the past ten or twenty years. Whereas Kandinsky spoke of 'unlimited possibilities', there has only been a dragging out on canvas after canvas of the same old withered forms. What is clearly lacking is any sign of vitality and life. Freedom, so conceived, has turned to be largely an illusion, and the world is pictured as a barren cell.

IAN HAMILTON FINLAY

MORE *FESTIVAL ENGLISH*

The English fairground has a tradition as old as London, and though new attractions and new thrills may be devised they will never supplant the roundabouts with their stiffly-prancing steeds, the gaily painted swings, the coconut shys and the well baited hoop-la stall. Nor will the romping blare of the organ down the street ever lose its compelling invitation. And it is good that we should all of us, throw discretion to the winds from time to time, take off our coat of years, and join entirely in the fun of the fair.

'*London Fairs*'—L.T.E. Poster

The Editor would be pleased to receive comments or annotations on this fine new example.

Le critique est un gardien de cimetière. Sartre.
La littérature d'aujourd'hui, une littérature de fossoyeurs. Garaudy.

Editorial

POINTS FOR THE ATTENTION OF ELECTORS

The election did not come soon enough. And it would, I think, be fair to say that it has only come now because there is no longer any hope that things will get better, that there will be any bonus, such as peace in Korea, or more coal for the winter, or tons of cheap meat from the Argentine for which the government could claim the credit. Politicians, whether they belong to a Party or a Movement, exist to obtain and retain power, and it is asking them to deny their nature to surrender or risk that power before it is absolutely necessary.

The days have gone when there was any advantage in declaring a 'snap' election. The two great party machines are permanent organisations; they resemble the Navy rather than the Army, in that they are now always on semi-active service.

* * *

Sainte-Beuve pointed out the inconvenience in a democracy of grossly flattering the electorate who, naturally enough, become spoiled. The most important part of the election propaganda is, in fact, flattery (the genius that provided scares has faded) but it is flattery of a peculiar kind. It aims to impress the electorate not with their wisdom, ability, or discernment, but with their commonplace stupidity (John Citizen, ordinary folk, Mr. Family-man) and their extreme short-sightedness in making a choice ('housewives who manage to feed their families in these difficult times won't find it hard to make up their minds who they want to "manage" the country, etc., etc.'). I have had no advance view of the hand-outs which are being prepared at headquarters; it is not necessary, for I can prophesy this *tone* in them with absolute certainty. The key-words will always be '*you*', '*folk*', '*reasonable*', '*decent*', '*honest*', all with the ironic twist, the Type II of William Empson's *Complex Words*. Empson quotes 'That's an honest lad, that Sir Charles' (so I'll vote for him) meaning that the working classes understood him and did not resent his claims to superiority—leading on to another curious development of democratic systems. I mean that no politician would dare to appeal for votes on the grounds that he was cleverer or even better qualified to make decisions than the electorate. The early framers of democracy hoped wistfully, first for citizens who would be fit to take turns in office and then for a people whose widely-diffused political good sense would point to the best, or at least to competent statesmen. But a General Election candidate, while he claims to be better than his opponents, must not give the impression that he is better than anyone else. The old dramatic discovery that the ruler, under his ceremonial trappings, is a suffering human being, is replaced by our present myth that the ruler looks commonplace, is commonplace, and is loved for being commonplace.

DICK DOGGED'S PROPHECY OF THE GREAT ELECTION

This prophecy I, Dick Dogged, do make appear
In the downdrop of the year
When these marvels are seen in the realm of Britain—
Farmers cattleless, money metal-less, summer sunless, cold coal-less
Then shall there be the great election

With perturbation
Consternation
Humiliation
Ready enditing
Considerable backbiting
Sing hey door-to-door, hey door-to-door—

And after all these wonders, both right and sinister
A new Parliament shall sit in Westminster
And I, Dick Dogged, shall bow full reverently
And next year I shall expect to see
Farmers cattleless, money metal-less, summer sunless, cold coal-less

Notes

MALAYA

The author of one of the most successful anti-Communist campaigns since the end of the war has been replaced with little ceremony and less thanks. Lieutenant-General Sir Harold Briggs, who instituted the plan that bears his name to deal with the Malayan bandits, has been succeeded at the age of fifty-eight by General Sir Robert Lockhart, who is fifty-nine. The small tribute that has been paid to Sir Harold's services in no way matches his outstanding achievement in restoring order and the foundation for prosperity in an area whose raw materials are vital to the West.

He found a whole British Army and nearly 100,000 Malayan police engaged in the impossible task of hunting small groups of bandits in the trackless and engulfing Malayan jungle. His plan embodied administrative measures which cut off the bandits' sources of supply and information —the half-million untabulated Chinese who had come to squat in the country before the war. Over 300,000 of these squatters have been re-settled in areas where they can no longer give sustenance to the bandits, and many of them are housed in guarded camps under strict control. Now the morale of the Communists—still armed with weapons dropped by us when they harried the Japanese as guerrillas—is beginning to break. Never more than a few thousand strong, they are now being obliged to combine in larger groups so that the leaders may prevent desertions. This in turn makes them easier to hunt, and their search for food is bringing them out into the open. Soon police action alone will serve to hold them in check and a large measure of normality will have been restored.

GREECE

Of all the European countries in the Western orbit, Greece is in the most parlous condition. Reconstruction of civil war devastation, still barely appreciated by those who have not actually visited the country, has been seriously impeded by the decline in real value of the foreign aid which still has to make up nearly two-thirds of the country's trade balance. Internally the value of the currency has become even further depressed, and the curious insistence on maintaining an unofficial gold standard has meant the expenditure of precious foreign exchange to retard the sinking value of the drachma. Political uncertainty has increased and there are signs that the country may return to the unhappy precedent of military authoritarianism which dominated affairs before the war. Field Marshal Papagos, who formed *rassemblement* of the Gaullist type which won a third of the total votes in the recent elections, may find that a reputation so magnificently won on the field of battle subjected to entirely different hazards when employed in the jungle of Greek politics.

The economic position is almost desperate. The demand for tobacco, the commodity which provides almost half the meagre foreign exchange income, is falling steadily in face of American and Rhodesian competition, and is not offset by recent new purchases by Germany. There is now a plan for devoting part of the tobacco acreage to cotton, and Greek textile factories may fulfil a new rôle by meeting Western defence contracts and the demand from her new-found neighbour to the north, Yugoslavia.

PERSIA

The Anglo-Persian oil dispute has reached a sorry impasse. The Western world is to be deprived of one of its principal sources of supply of this precious commodity, the international allocation of which will now have to be readjusted, and the Persians have disinherited themselves of their principal source of revenue. Valuable capital equipment must suffer inevitable deterioration, and overshadowing the whole situation comes the threat of unemployment and a decline in the standard of living in Persia, which can only provide ammunition for the Communists. It may yet be that the elections which must constitutionally be held some time after 23 November, may provide some alleviation.

The sound and fury of the battle on the specific question of oil supplies has tended to obscure the internal political battle in Persia. The driving force of the National Front Party is predominantly an abstract conception of national rejuvenation, of which ownership of the oil industry is only one aspect. If by any chance the new elections returned a Majlis which represented an advance on the present clique of self-seeking individuals which make up its membership, the National Front Party, if it were still in power, might feel that the work of national renaissance had taken a sufficient forward step to permit a more forthcoming attitude in the oil question. It is a slender hope, but the only one in a situation where the unpleasant alternatives are so overpowering and so numerous.

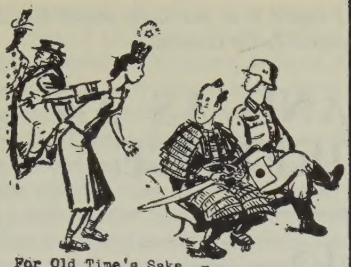
GERMANY

The German gift for subjective argument does not seem to lessen over the course of the years. The various political and economic difficulties, which have arisen between the Bonn Government and the Western Allies, reveal once again their fatal capacity for mass auto-suggestion and specious reasoning. In spite of recently reducing taxation below the levels imposed in some of the victor countries, an outcry has been raised that the Federal budget cannot meet the increased occupation costs, which form Germany's only present contribution to Western defence. Protests at the cost of additional barracks and houses to accommodate additional Allied troops take no cognisance of the fact that the Germans themselves insisted that the number of Allied troops stationed on their territory should be increased as proof of the fact that it was our intention to hold the line of the Elbe rather than that of the Rhine. In the economic field German unwillingness to continue the export of coal within the framework of European aid programmes conveniently ignores the fact that these quotas were laid down as a prerequisite of general recovery, and that they are only being asked to carry out prior engagements. The insensate squandering of international aid funds on luxury goods rather than capital equipment for mines and industry has been a fraudulent procedure which would land any individual bankrupt in gaol. Not one German politician has been statesman enough to tell his country that the standards of economic morality current in her Western neighbours must also be applied in the Federal Republic and that the demands of a defence budget require a temporary reduction in the standard of living in Germany as elsewhere.

INDIA

The fifth year of Indian independence is bringing as much confusion in the affairs of the Congress Party as in the minds of foreign observers who have tried to rationalise India's external policies. Having tried the patience of even his most fervent admirers abroad by the contradiction between his attitude in the Kashmir dispute and his somewhat lordly approach to Russo-American affairs, Pandit Nehru now finds himself faced at home with a near-disintegration of his chief body of support, which can hardly enhance his shrinking reputation as a statesman.

Like all revolutionary organisations, the Congress Party has not long survived the event which, as a goal, provided its initial cohesion. It was formed to overthrow British rule and its members included people of such diverse basic political tendencies that, once their object had been achieved, further unanimity became impossible. Now Socialists are breaking away from Capitalists, Gandhians are breaking away from bureaucrats and Hindu theocrats are quarrelling with those brought up in Western traditions. At present Congress is still the Government Party both in the States and at the centre, but its former impetus has gone and it is unlikely that it would survive another election as the dominant force. Nehru's differences with Purshottamdas Tandon, the former Congress President, have come to a head. Tandon is an archaic figure, but if his support increases, Nehru himself may have to join the seceders, who are predominantly towards the Left. Nehru's immense personal prestige, however, has so far maintained him in power and also won for him the presidency of the Party in place of Tandon, so that he now controls Congress as well as the Government.

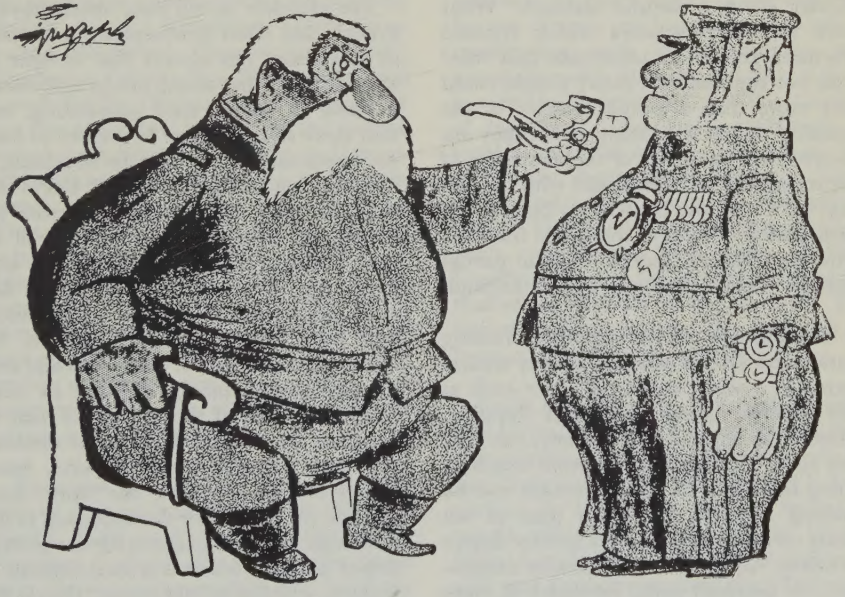


For Old Time's Sake. -
"When you are talking about treaties put in a good word for me".
Merlo Giallo, Italy.

New Boots. -
Die Wochen Zeitung, Switzerland.

Suspicious Character

Christian Science Monitor. -



Keeping the proportion. -
"To counteract De Gaspari's visit to Washington get me fifteen or sixteen Togliattis".
Candido - Italy.

'Had British forces not been present in Northern Ireland I regard it as practically certain that all Ireland would have been conquered and occupied by the Germans'

NORTHERN IRELAND AS AN OUTPOST OF DEFENCE

CYRIL FALLS

Chichele Professor of Military History, Oxford

The strategic problem of Ireland in relation to England is eternal. It had appeared before the Elizabethan age, though not in so serious a form, when France temporarily interested herself in Irish affairs. It reappeared at the end of the seventeenth century, when French arms supported in Ireland a king who had been driven from the English throne. It reappeared at the end of the eighteenth century, in the wars of the French Revolution, when the last battle against the land forces of a foreign invader was fought at Ballinamuck. It reappeared in the First World War in the early twentieth century, and once more, as a very important issue, in the Second World War. It influences the attitude of British governments to the partition of Ireland and reinforces the plea of Northern Ireland to remain a part of the United Kingdom.—*Elizabeth's Irish Wars*[1]

SINCE the end of the Second World War there has been much talk of the part played in it by Northern Ireland, particularly in keeping open the Atlantic transport routes. 'By the grace of God,' wrote Mr. Churchill, 'Ulster stood a faithful sentinel.' What were the circumstances which enabled Northern Ireland to undertake that rôle? I do not suppose that many people could give more than a partial answer to the question. It has something to do, they are aware, with the effect of the neutrality of the remainder of Ireland and with the fact that the Clyde and the Mersey became the destinations of most of the traffic from the Atlantic. This is indeed only a partial answer, which I shall attempt to expand.

The problem of the commerce-raiding nation has always taken a roughly similar form. In a vast expanse of water such as the Atlantic Ocean, merchant shipping, whether or not sailing in convoy, can take any route it chooses. It can avoid attack by going far out of its natural course and by making zig-zags, the extra time at sea being compensated for by a greater degree of safety. As, however, it nears its destination, its terminal ports, its choice of route becomes limited, and shipping, which has been moving by widely-separated routes, is compelled to converge. This feature is most striking when the destination is represented by a comparatively small stretch of territory such as Great Britain. Outward-bound shipping is, of course, subject to a similar limitation.

The attacker, in old days nearly always French and often represented by corsairs or privateers, has always had to bear in mind the fact that attack out in mid-ocean is likely to be the safer proceeding, but that there the prey may be harder to find. As it approaches or leaves the terminals, it should be relatively easy to find; but in this case the hunt will be more dangerous for the hunter because the shipping will be more strongly protected. This is still true in the day of the submarine; but the aircraft and modern means of communication have influenced the problem by making it easier than it was to find and sink the merchant-shipping right out in mid-ocean. The aim of the defence is then to establish sea and air bases some distance out from its main terminal ports, bases which will at one and the same time provide close cover for the approach to the terminals and springboards for the protection of shipping where it is most difficult to protect, which is in mid-ocean. That is the theoretical conception. Now let us see how Northern Ireland fits into it. At the same time we may glance at Ireland in the rôle

[1] *Elizabeth's Irish Wars.* Cyril Falls. *Methuen*

of a possible objective to an enemy in war.

First of all, the territory formed by the six counties of Northern Ireland does not provide by any means ideal bases for the purposes mentioned; but in the Second World War it did provide, in conjunction with Iceland, the only ones available. From the point of view of close cover to the approach to the terminals, the weakness is that it affords good protection to one route only, that which passes north of Ireland and is known as the North-West Approaches. From the point of view of protection of shipping in mid-ocean, it is not far enough away from the coast of Great Britain, or near enough to the area of mid-ocean, to give all the protection on the water and in the air that is desirable.

The Second World War represented the first occasion on which Britain had to depend upon Northern Ireland alone for the protection of outgoing and incoming shipping. In the old wars Southern Ireland was available and was far more important. In the First World War, the first time we had to face the submarine menace, a number of harbours all round the coast were made use of for this purpose: Belfast, Larne, Kingstown (Dun Laoghaire), Waterford, Queenstown (Cobh), Berehaven, Galway Bay, Blacksod Bay and Lough Swilly. Of these, Queenstown took the first place, and in 1915 all the western patrol areas, from the Hebrides to Ushant, off Brest, were placed under a single command, with headquarters at Queenstown. That port was also used as a base for the submarine decoys known as 'Q-ships', and after the entry of the United States, it was there that the American Admiral W. S. Sims took over command. While Ireland had already played a big part in the protection of the ocean routes in war, it had never proved itself so valuable as after the advent of the submarine.

Such was the situation when the partition of Ireland took place after the First World War, and the Government of Northern Ireland was set up. To begin with, the prospect remained that Southern Irish bases would be available in time of war, but that eventually passed away only a short time before the outbreak of the Second World War. And when this war came, the Government of Eire adopted a policy of neutrality, from which no persuasion from the United Kingdom or even from the United States would budge it. The policy was interpreted with a certain benevolence for which the British Government had reason to be grateful, but it was neutrality none the less. For the purposes for which all Irish territory had been made use of in the First World War and for the new purposes demanded by the growth of the air arm in range and power, the United Kingdom would have to depend upon Northern Ireland alone. In addition, it had to take account of the fact that it might have to meet a German invasion of Eire, while not permitted to station forces on the territory or in the anchorage of Eire.

To start with, matters did not go too badly. It was found possible to send convoys and other ocean shipping round the south of Ireland. Then the situation was transformed in 1940 by the German subjugation of Norway, Denmark, the Low Countries and France. The enemy now possessed far easier access to the Atlantic; he was able to use long-range aircraft in combination with his submarines; and about the same time the number of these in commission increased, and the standard of training of the crews improved. A terrible and vital struggle now began. We talk of the 'Battle of the Atlantic', but it was in fact a long campaign, with several phases. The value of the Northern Ireland ports used by the Royal Navy—Belfast, Londonderry and Larne—leapt up, as did that of the airfields in the territory. The loss of Queenstown and the potential air bases of Eire became acutely felt.

From now onwards, incoming shipping was virtually confined to the North-West Approaches. The great bulk of it made for the Clyde and the Mersey. Even if it were making for the Welsh ports or Bristol, it would still come in through the North-West Approaches; even such shipping as still used English east-coast ports had to be diverted from the Channel and sent north-about round Scotland.

The part played by naval vessels based

on the three Ulster ports and aircraft based upon Ulster airfields—under which heading may be included flying-boats based on Lough Erne, in County Fermanagh—would furnish a long and complex but noble story. Space permits it to be summarised only. On the naval side, it is largely but by no means only, a record of the flotilla, that is, of light craft—escort vessels, anti-submarine vessels, trawlers, sweepers, and so forth. Belfast became a most important trawler base. These vessels, moored in long rows side by side, so that one could pass across half a dozen or more, were a remarkable spectacle, especially as those one saw represented only the proportion off duty.

The small port of Londonderry played a more spectacular part. It was used as a base for escort vessels for convoy protection and developed into the main advanced fuelling base. Its great development was, however, from February 1942, when it became a United States base. It was now used as the terminus of the American escort vessels on the run across the North Atlantic to and from British ports. The Newfoundland Escort Force of the Royal Canadian Navy put it to the same purpose. Yet it was much more than an anchorage; it was a repairing, and to a great extent later on, a training base. Its facilities, in fact, had to be gradually developed to keep pace with the changes of the Battle of the Atlantic. A number of naval air stations were in the latter part of the war also established in Northern Ireland.

The Royal Air Force was, of course, affected by the enemy's advance to Norway, the Channel, and the Biscay coast in the same way as the Navy. Northern Ireland now became the most important base for aircraft engaged in the protection of trans-Atlantic shipping at all ranges, from short-range fighter cover to the Catalinas on Lough Erne, and the Coastal Command Liberators and Flying Fortresses. It is hardly fair to suggest that any one type was more vital than any other, since each possessed its proper place; yet perhaps the palm should go to the 'very long-range' Liberators at Ballykelly and Aldergrove, with detachments in Iceland, working in co-operation with surface convoy escorts. Evidence from the German side suggests that the fight with the 'wolf packs' in the summer of 1942 could not have been won without their aid, and the Northern Ireland bases constituted a powerful, if not an indispensable, factor in this aid. By late 1943 victory seemed assured, with the result that certain reductions were made in the strength of the air forces stationed in Northern Ireland. However, the enemy's technical skill was not altogether exhausted. In the summer of 1944, having equipped his U-boats with the Schnorkel breathing-tube, he launched a bold inshore campaign against shipping. This called for reinforcement in Northern Ireland, but the renewed offensive of Doenitz achieved only a small measure of success.

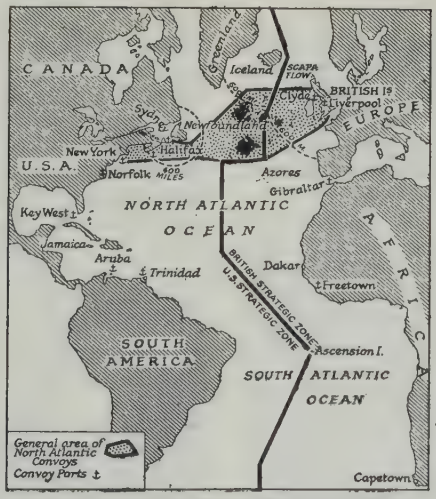
The active rôle of the Army in Northern Ireland was confined to anti-aircraft defence, but during the second year of the war its very presence in the country was highly important strategically. There existed the possibility that Ireland would be used by the Germans as a stepping-stone to Great Britain, the purpose for which the Spaniards in the reign of Elizabeth and the French in the reigns of William III and George III had attempted to use it. Resistance on the part of the armed forces of Eire could be counted upon; but they were small in numbers and lacked modern equipment and experience. It is difficult to say whether or not a German invasion of Ireland ever became a serious possibility, but we do at least know that two schemes were put forward to Hitler by his military advisers, the first for an invasion of Eire, the second for an airborne landing in Northern Ireland itself. The aims of the latter were diversion of effort on the British side and destruction of the valuable industrial aid which Britain derived from Northern Ireland. It was considered that, if the invading force could not maintain itself, it might be able to withdraw across the border into Eire, so that the troops would be interned instead of becoming prisoners-of-war.

The land forces stationed in Northern Ireland thus found themselves carrying the

main responsibility for the defence of all Ireland, while confined to the territory of Northern Ireland, six counties only. They had to draw up plans for intervention in the defence of a neutral country, just as had been the case with regard to Belgium and Holland in the spring of 1940. I well remember, when I visited Ulster that summer, being shown on a map the lines of operation to meet various eventualities. Knowing the slender strength available, and the relatively poor equipment during the period following the disaster of Dunkirk, it seemed to me likely to be a grim undertaking. I believe that sea and air power would have isolated any landing force, and that this would eventually have been destroyed by reinforcements from England; but even so, Germany would probably have benefited on balance. And, had British forces not been present in Northern Ireland, I regard it as practically certain that all Ireland would have been conquered and occupied by the Germans. In that case the main British military effort of late 1940 and 1941 would have been diverted from North Africa to Ireland. It would have been a negative instead of a positive effort, desperate self-defence instead of offensive operations which in the long run opened up excellent strategic possibilities. While this struggle was in progress, the Germans would have won immense advantages in the Battle of the Atlantic. The general effect on the war would have been incalculable.

It is sometimes argued that these dangers would be averted if partition were brought to an end, if Northern Ireland became incorporated in the Irish Republic, and if the Irish Republic became a member state of the North Atlantic Treaty. In an article on military strategy, purely political and sentimental considerations may be omitted, though they have some place in strategy. On the military side, however, it must be noted that the obligations of the North Atlantic Treaty would not compensate for the withdrawal of Northern Ireland from the United Kingdom. Under that arrangement Ireland would be less defensible, not more, and there would be no guarantee whatever that Britain would be left in a position to make the dispositions necessary for the defence of the trans-Atlantic routes.

The problems of defence have changed in certain respects since the Second World War. The importance of the trans-Atlantic routes remains unaltered; indeed, it might be said that it has now become greater than ever. The place of Northern Ireland in the perimeter of defence of the British Isles—including the Irish Republic itself—is still strategically vital.



ATLANTIC OCEAN: DEFENCE ORGANIZATION, 1942

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THE HOUSING PROBLEM

ERNEST MARPLES, M.P.

THE housing problem in this country can be divided into two main parts: first, the building of new houses, and secondly, the repair and proper use of the existing stock of houses. On both these counts, the Government has failed, and the main responsibility must lie with Mr. Bevan, who has been master of our housing fortunes for so many years. He has, however, skilfully diverted discussion of his housing and health policies by attacking rearmament. Not for him the rôle of defender. He has no superior when it comes to strewing red herrings in a manner advantageous to himself.

When losing in debate, he has always adopted the motto 'No case, abuse the opposing Counsel.' So he now lashes his former colleagues on rearmament.

BUILDING NEW HOUSES

Let us take the building of new houses first. The Government have failed on numbers, type, size and cost. They have built too few; they have built too many three-bedroom houses; the size has just been reduced because it was too big, and the cost has been too high.

Numbers

The Government has failed to build sufficient new houses to replace those which become obsolete every year. We have it on the authority of Mr. Bevan himself that each year 200,000 houses fall into decay. If this is so, if only 200,000 are built, we do no more than replace those which he said fall into decay.

There are two significant facts about present and recent housing progress. First, *less* than 200,000 are now being built. Secondly, whereas before the war there was a steadily-expanding production, under Socialism, production has been erratic; at first there was rapid expansion and later steady contraction. But a sustained and steady expansion (even if slow) of output is needed to create the confident spirit and high morale among workers or management, which is necessary to obtain high output at economic prices. This is particularly true in a heavy industry. Confidence quickly oozes away when Government policy causes the orders to shrink.

Type

Not only have the Government built too few houses; they have been building the wrong type of house. Over fifty per cent of the total building programme consists of three-bedroom houses. The proportion of one and two-bedroom houses must be increased. This would enable elderly people now occupying large houses to move into the new smaller houses and release the large houses for families. In these days of housing shortage, too few people are occupying too many rooms, because they are unable to move into a smaller and more suitable house. In addition, smaller houses mean lower rents, which, in these days of high building-costs, is a consideration.

Size

The Dudley Committee recommended certain improvements in layout which can be incorporated in a three-bedroom house of some 850 sq. ft., plus 70 sq. ft. of

out-buildings, making 920 sq. ft. in all. Under Mr. Bevan, the 920 sq. ft. increased to 1,050 sq. ft. in 1949. His successor, Mr. Dalton, has now approved a smaller house as long as essential standards are maintained. This change of attitude in the sixth year of a housing programme is proof that the earlier policy of the Government was misconceived and extravagant.

If Mr. Bevan's house of 1,050 sq. ft., costing about £1,400, were replaced generally by a house of 850 sq. ft. (a size which can incorporate all the major Dudley Committee recommendations), we would save £200 per house, which would enable the country to build 34,000 more houses each year without additional cost.

Put it another way: You could have, for the same cost, either a row of six 'Bevan' houses—giving accommodation to six families and leaving one on the waiting list—or a row of seven slightly smaller 'Dudley Committee' houses, accommodating seven families. Do not let us forget that pre-war Council houses were on the average not more than 800 sq. ft., while the post-war American house averages 700 sq. ft. This seems an odd fact in the light of American generosity to this country. Is it reasonable that for six years the Government insisted on larger dwellings to the point where many people had to do without?

Cost

The costs of new houses are too high. Mr. Bevan failed to lower the capital costs and consequently to lower rents. At the present cost of building, heavy new subsidies will have to be paid to enable wage-earners to afford the rent. Housing subsidies will cost £60 million in the current financial year, compared with £3 million in 1938. Some clear and dispassionate thinking is required on the question of subsidies.

MAINTAINING EXISTING HOUSES

The Government's other main failure has been in the problem of maintaining existing houses. In England and Wales these number 11,500,000, of which 7,000,000 or 8,000,000 are let to tenants. Almost 6,000,000 of the 11,500,000 are over fifty years old, and of these 6,000,000, 2,250,000 are over 100 years old.

It is not surprising if many of the houses which are rented are in imminent danger of falling into utter decay; nor is the maximum use always made of the accommodation they provide. For this state of things, rent restriction and inflation are jointly and mainly answerable. The money received as rent (which necessarily includes an element for repair) is frozen at various levels at pre-1939 levels. But repairs in 1951 probably cost three times as much as in 1939. About 4,000,000 tenants still pay the same amount of rent and repairs as they did in 1920.

The Political and Economic Planning Report on Rent Control Policy says: 'A large part of the national stock of houses is in danger of rapid deterioration, to avoid which some action is necessary.' The Report goes on to stress the urgency of the problem and urges that something must be done, even if it is 'politically unpopular and administratively difficult.'

They are right: if the problem is not faced and an answer of some sort given soon, a great part of the population will be cheaply housed in decayed and decaying houses. Dry rot and disintegrating walls will not wait for a politically-convenient moment.

Money must be found for essential repairs, otherwise a national heritage will be lost. And this money can be found either by the State, the landlord, or the tenant. Should the State pay and continue to let rents be frozen? Should the landlord be forced to carry out all necessary repairs at 1951 prices while his rental income is limited to 1939 rents? Or should the tenant be made to pay as a condition of continuing to pay 1939 rents? Or should there be a combination of all three methods?

One thing must be repugnant to the British sense of fair play. Local Authorities can raise their rents, but other landlords may not do so. Is it right there should be one law for the Local Authorities and another for the rest?

During his five and a half years of power, Mr. Bevan shirked the issue. In 1949 he said: 'In the next Parliament it is clear that the Rent Restriction Acts will have to be dealt with.' In 1950 (a year later when a Minister in the 'next Parliament') he said: 'If anyone thinks this Government is going

to tackle rent restriction, they must be mad.' Yet, when defending Local Authority increases of rent, he argued that it was as easy for a Council house tenant to pay 13s. or 14s. net rent now, as it was to pay 10s. in 1945, owing to average increases in wages.

These contradictory attitudes and arguments prove that he is more concerned with personal popularity and retaining power than in maintaining the nation's existing houses.

It is clear that Mr. Bevan had not the guts to face up to the problem. But it will have to be faced, and faced quickly. The choice is between doing repairs or losing houses. If these repairs are not carried out quickly, we shall leave to future generations a legacy of slums and decayed and rotten houses, the like of which has not been seen before. The Socialists may well be remembered for the slums they are creating.

They have never realised the importance of making an early decision. An early decision on Ground Nuts could have saved half of the £35 million loss. An early decision on Gambia's eggs could have reduced the cost of eggs from £10 to £5 each.

We all remember the story of the young army officer instructing his squad in foot drill for the first time. He lost his nerve and became tongue-tied, just when the squad were marching towards the edge of a cliff. About ten yards from the edge, the leading soldier turned round and piteously said: 'For God's sake, sir, say something, even if it is only goodbye.'

It is the same with repairs to existing houses. We have got to say something, 'even if it is only goodbye', to them.

Now for constructive suggestions on the building of new houses. Two separate problems are involved, one technical, the other social. And rational discussion is impossible unless each problem is considered separately.

The technical problem is to build the maximum number of good-quality houses in the shortest practicable time at the lowest possible cost. It covers the progress of a house from the virgin soil to the last roofing tile.

The social problem starts when the houses are completed. It decides who should own and occupy them and at what rent. When houses are scarce, social and economic reasons must be given due weight in deciding the social question.

But I am now concerned solely with the technical task of building houses. What happens when the house is completed is another theme. From the technical angle it does not matter if it is given away, sold or let.

THE FIRST STEP

The only constructive method is to analyse what happens on the actual site where houses are built. The snags and problems involved should be investigated, and the massive Government machine should fit in with the needs of the site. Any general wishing to get the best out of his troops would visit them and find out their requirements. He would not make a plan without having the foggiest notion of their difficulties.

The Socialists' first error was to work the other way round. Mr. Bevan, their housing general (without any technical housing knowledge), imposed his plan on the builders without investigating their problems and decreed: 'You will conform to my plan.' No wonder the housing programme failed.

An analysis of site conditions proves that what is wanted is rhythmical repetition of operations.

Over half-a-dozen trades must be delicately dovetailed together. The endless-belt technique must be kept going to mass-produce houses in the shortest possible time. A hold-up in one trade stymies all others.

To produce this rhythm and flow there are five requirements:

1. A steady stream of orders related to the capacity of the industry.

2. Adequate pre-planning before a sod is cut.

3. A reliable and steady supply of materials.

4. Site conditions which promote smoothness of operation by encouraging prompt decisions on the spot.

5. A new spirit which must be kindled.

The first requirement concerns orders. The Government control all building. But their demands have been totally unrelated to the capacity of the industry. The flow of orders has been unsteady to the point of being erratic.

The Working Party on the building industry say the Government 'launched a building programme greatly in excess of the existing resources . . . Subsequent efforts to adjust the building programme were unsuccessful . . . This made it impossible for the building contractor to organise his business so as to provide for an even and regular flow.'

So the Government's conduct makes the job of the builder impossible, and the builders in the front-line trenches are planned to a standstill by the Socialist non-technical General from a 'remote control' room in Whitehall.

My suggestion is that we must stick to a known and predictable plan, even if it is not a perfect one. Spasmodic short-term fluctuations to satisfy political egos and ambitions merely produce among builders 'Order, counter order, and disorder'—with fewer but more expensive houses.

In the matter of pre-planning, the productivity team which visited America, in their report on building efficiency, stressed that: 'Proper pre-planning is a determining factor.'

But our own Working Party say: 'Existing (Government) arrangements for issue of licences cause delays and uncertainties which are inimical to efficiency and make pre-planning of jobs impossible.' So once again the Socialist planners in practice make the job of the builders impossible.

SOCIALISM'S 'BIG WAY'

One Government department only should shoulder the responsibility for issuing all necessary licences within a given time limit. This will give builders a fairer chance to pre-plan their operations.

Incentive schemes, pre-planning and all the other ingredients essential for speedy building go down the drain without an adequate supply of men. The Government planners have had power and opportunity: What they done have?

'Let there be no misunderstanding,' said Mr. Tomlinson, then the Minister of Works, in November 1945, 'It is the intention of the Government to go into business both in the manufacture and in the distribution of building materials and components in a big way.'

So there is now no room for misunderstanding. This brave utterance about 'a big way' was followed by nearly five years of action, and the pathetic results are dealt with by the Working Party, who hold that 'Scarcity of building materials since the war contributed perhaps more than any other factor to the fall in productivity.'

They go on to say: 'The campaign to finish houses and capital cuts in 1948, both introduced with little or no warning, affected also the producers of building materials, who found that their assessment of the demand for goods was likely to be upset by sudden changes of policy they could not possibly foresee.'

INTERVENTIONIST CHAOS

Clearly 'planning' has been confused with 'intervening'. Planning in action proves to be merely interventionist chaos.

As for decisions, the intricate co-ordination of the separate trades frequently demands a speedy decision rather than one which is a hundred per cent correct. And the day-to-day flexibility inherent in private enterprise building makes it admirably suited to giving decisions rapidly.

'In regard to housing by private enterprise for sale and for letting,' say the Productivity Team, 'the results achieved in the United States since 1945 confirm pre-war experience in Britain that the highly competitive nature of the market for such houses results in high productivity and continually lower cost.'

This positively clinches the argument that a builder erecting houses for himself produced lower costs than when building for a Local Authority (an unsuitable, clumsy and non-technical agency) under a rigid iron-bound specification and price.

The reason is that the elastic procedures of private enterprise allow for those speedy decisions on the site which alone can maintain the correct phasing of the job.

My suggestion on this point is that all ratios should be scrapped, and each local authority should have a voice in deciding

its own needs as between the different forms of building. Eastbourne has problems different from those of Ebbw Vale—in more ways than one—and local requirements, not Mr. Bevan's ideology, should prevail.

CONDEMNED BY EVENTS

Finally, one comes to the psychological aspect. Above all a change of heart and spirit is needed. Politicians and the State are expected to produce everything for the individual as of right. The Welfare State is socially ideal and sentimentally excellent. But only time will show the economic results.

If the floor below which a lazy man cannot sink is raised practically to the ceiling above which an industrious craftsman cannot rise, then incentives for bursts of productivity are wrecked. It is all a question of degree. A change of climate and outlook is imperative and perhaps only events can produce this. Our people are stimulated by challenges and adversity.

The lives of men, businesses and nations have much in common. A fresh start is often imperative. Britain needs one now.

The Socialists' great electoral victory of 1945 gave them an impetus which inevitably has petered out. They are now so bewildered that they are merely drifting. Placidity and resignation to events have replaced burning enthusiasm and zeal. It is only natural that it should be so.

Only a new Government (be it Socialist or Tory) with a substantial majority and a new mandate can make the new start in Housing that is essential for success. And the impetus and enthusiasm of a new start will only be sustained if younger and fresher men are brought in.

Housing is due for a spring cleaning. The plans must be boldly recast so as to appeal to the imagination of the nation. The drive and enthusiasm of new leaders is needed.

THE COUNTER REVOLUTION IN THE 'PEOPLES' DEMOCRACIES'

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In 1945 the leaders of the Soviet Union had the future development of Eastern Europe all mapped out. What actually took place between 1945 and 1951 in that part of the world not only failed to fulfil Russian expectations but actually constituted—contrary to what is generally believed in the West—a complete wreck of the carefully-prepared Soviet designs.

With the creation of the original 'peoples' democracies', with their mixed economy and the preservation of the forms of parliamentary democracy, the Soviet leaders had given their blessing to, rather than inspired, a movement which, to a greater extent than has ever been realised in the West, was not only started by the will of the majority of the peoples in those countries, the small industrial proletariat and the huge masses of landless agricultural workers, but was a movement also caused directly by the historical development since the end of the First World War. The retarded industrial development and the absence of capital accumulation in Hungary, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Rumania and Poland—the case of Czechoslovakia being distinct from the other Soviet dependencies—resulted inevitably in the establishment of regimes whose first task it was to catch up with the political and economic progress in other, more advanced countries of the West and of the Soviet

Union. With the defeat of the Fascist and reactionary regimes in these countries, and with the elimination of the relatively small but powerful class of property-owning men compromised by active collaboration with the Germans, all effective opposition to the establishment of socialist regimes had either been abolished or at least decisively weakened. The Soviet Government could afford to confine itself to 'guidance by remote control', though in ex-enemy countries, like Hungary and Rumania, this control was bound to be more direct.

Thus the 'first revolution', which took place in several stages between 1945 and 1948, can be said to have been a 'revolt from below' almost along classical Marxist-Leninist lines. Almost, but not quite! For the absence of orthodox civil war, as foreseen by the prophets of Marxism, had to be explained—sometimes rather tortuously—by Communist theoreticians by the fact that the anti-Fascist war and the struggle for liberation from the Germans *and* from the reactionary elements who collaborated with, and profited from, the occupants, took the place of the internal class struggle in its acutest form, i.e. violent social revolutions. This in 1944–6 became the official thesis of the Russian Politbureau and of Soviet policy towards Russia's western and south-western neighbours. It can be summed up thus: 'The "progressive" forces, after having taken over from the Fascist and collaborating landowners and bourgeoisie, can now be safely left to work out their own socialist salvation under the mere friendly guidance of Soviet Russia.' Of course, Russia always had the respective Communist Parties to fall back on in order to ensure that the policies of the 'peoples' democracies' did not run counter to the long-term interests of the Soviet Union.

The practical expression of this policy in the various countries was:

1. In Poland there existed for the first two years after the war an uneasy partnership between the numerically powerful Socialist and Peasant Parties on the one hand, and the handful of Moscow-backed Communists on the other.

2. In Bulgaria the 'National Front' included all parties which had opposed the pro-German policy and who had fought for the country's liberation. Dimitrov's past and his standing in Moscow merely served to enhance the prestige of the numerically insignificant Communist Party.

3. In Hungary the first post-war elections showed the strength of the old Smallholders' Party, as well as the not very palatable fact that a great number of landless labourers believed that their interests would be better served by the party of their former masters than by the party of the urban proletariat.

4. In Czechoslovakia the 'National Front' differed from similar combinations in other Eastern European countries by the fact that here the Communists emerged from the 1946 elections as the strongest single political party. But here, too, the accent was on a mixed economy and the collaboration of industrial workers, farmers and small-scale entrepreneurs rather than on class struggle.

5. In Rumania the Communists were able to assume a more dominant rôle from the start, partly owing to the almost complete absence of other effectively-organised working class parties, partly to the military situation during the last months of the war, which gave the Soviet Army far more possibilities of intervention in the internal affairs of the country.

6. In Yugoslavia, the National Front there was from the first a nominal body rather than an effective instrument of policy and government as in Czechoslovakia. But here, too, the country was regarded by the Politbureau as a 'safe bet' in allowing it to make its own way towards Socialism. In Yugoslavia's case there seemed to be the added insurance of her dependence on capital goods from Russia and Czechoslovakia.

The development in all these countries in the first two years after the war fully seemed to justify Russia's assumption that the popular support of these bloodless

revolutions would make a loose federation of Socialist countries loyal and friendly to the Soviet Union not only possible but certain. Accordingly, the Politbureau line was: 'Towards Socialism by various roads', and the tactics of the Communist Parties were to a greater or less degree laid down by Moscow as the tactics of the 'vanguard in the march towards Socialism'.

The first flaw appeared in Poland, where Witos's and Mikolajczyk's Peasant Party refused to surrender political leadership to the Communists and where the first attempts to 'merge' the Socialist and Communist Parties came up against the unexpected resistance of a hard core of anti-Communist Social Democrats like Puzak and Zulavski. This was the first sign of Moscow's great error: a gross underestimation of the nationalist feelings of the other Slav nations.

The first shock came in July 1947 in Prague, when Moscow was suddenly confronted with the unanimous decision of the Czech Cabinet to follow Britain's and France's invitation to take part in the first meeting to discuss General Marshall's offer of economic aid to Europe. It was the first important occasion after the creation of the 'peoples' democracies' when Moscow saw itself compelled to abandon the 'guidance principle' and to resort to an outright veto of a major decision independently arrived at by the spokesmen of the Communist Party of one of the Soviet group of nations. At that moment Czechoslovakia, the lynch-pin of Russia's system of economic and political alliances, stood at the cross-roads at which Tito was to arrive a year later. Moscow suddenly realised that one of its fundamental principles in dealing with the other Eastern European nations was based on a dangerous fallacy, i.e. the belief that the Soviet lead would be followed *automatically* as a matter of 'enlightened self-interest' by the peoples' democracies. The second shock came in Czechoslovakia when, at the Social Democrats' Congress at Brno in November 1947, the pro-Soviet Fierlinger and his faction were decisively defeated and thrown out of office by the moderate, internationally-minded wing of the Party. These two danger signals not only gave rise to the events of February 1948 in Prague, but were to have far more momentous consequences.

These same events coincided with developments in Hungary, where, despite frantic gerrymandering of the second post-war elections in July 1947, the Communist Party failed anew to gain a decisive electoral victory. And with the seizure of power in Czechoslovakia in February 1948, with the formal fusion of the two working-class parties in Poland in the autumn of 1948, with the trial and execution of Petkov in Sofia, the disappearance of the secretary of the Hungarian Smallholders' Party, Kovacs, the elimination of Titel Petrescu and Maniu in Rumania, *the 'first revolution' can be said to have been concluded, namely the elimination of the property-owning class and its last liberal spokesmen as economic and political factors in the government of their countries.*

But while the 'class enemy' was being routed, the first cracks appeared in the structure which the Soviet leaders had planned with so much care and optimism. Of the two factors which compelled the policymakers in Moscow to reverse their strategy towards the 'peoples' democracies' with characteristic thoroughness and disregard of all that had gone before, one was a positive element which ought to have been allowed for by Zhdanov, Vyshinski and Stalin at the moment when the Cominform was launched as a retaliatory weapon against the Marshall Plan and the 'hotting up' of the cold war—Slav nationalism. The other factor, i.e. the false assumption that the authority of the Soviet Union, or, more important still, of the Bolshevik Politbureau, would never be called upon to meet a dangerous challenge from the very regimes whose 'renascence' it had sponsored, was perhaps less easy to foresee and certainly much more difficult to cope with. But when, in all six countries forming the 'glacis' of the Soviet Union, symptoms of increasing restiveness appeared in the rank and file as well as in the leadership of the Communist Party, and when, again within the Party, the 'guidance' of the Russian Party was not always unquestioningly accepted—in spite of Russia's

exploitation of the almost universal fear of a reviving militaristic Germany—the Politbureau found itself confronted with a situation which, if allowed to get out of hand, would have constituted the gravest threat to the ideological foundations of the Soviet State since Trotsky's banishment in 1927.

In Russia, nationalism had been the logical outcome of the dogma 'Socialism in one country' which Stalin dictated to the first 'monolithic' Central Committee in 1928, after the crushing of the first 'left' opposition within the Bolshevik Party. But it was a nationalism imposed for ulterior motives by the Soviet rulers. With the advent of the 'popular front' policy after the VIIth Congress of the Comintern in 1935, the new Soviet nationalism was shelved *pro tempore* for the sake of a renewed, though bogus, internationalism on an anti-Fascist basis. With the outbreak of the cold war shortly after the armistice, Soviet nationalism erupted again in far more violent forms, and 'cosmopolitanism' became the supreme crime. This wave of chauvinism was, however, greatly helped by the fact that by that time the generation of old revolutionaries had largely disappeared from the Soviet scene and had been superseded by a generation nurtured on the 'socialism in one country' theory, a generation for which the movements, personalities and events beyond their frontiers were but hazy and deliberately distorted phenomena.

In the new 'peoples' democracies' conditions were vastly different. And the failure to realise this can be seen now as the deadliest error committed by the Soviet rulers since the forcible collectivisation campaigns of 1929–31 and the misjudgment of Allied strength and intentions in August 1939. In Poland and Czechoslovakia, nationalism had been the most powerful factor in the survival of the two peoples as independent nations, the one from Tsarist imperialism, the other from Habsburg oppression. To a less extent nationalism had played a similar part in the history of Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria. The Soviet under-estimation of the strength of the nationalist feelings of the South Slavs, a strength which, in a supreme national crisis, strikingly won the day over traditional Serb affection for Little Mother Russia, is an amazing instance of that puzzling Soviet failing—crass ignorance of the mentality and psychology of the non-Russian peoples.

The defection of Tito and the Yugoslav Communist Party was *not* the unexpected thunderbolt it appeared to Western opinion. Quite apart from the fact that Stalin was unpleasantly impressed by Tito's ebullient self-assurance during the latter's visits in Moscow in 1945 and 1946, the Yugoslav 'rebellion' was the culmination of a process that had been smouldering under the surface—if in a less acute form—in all the countries of the Soviet glacis since 1947. The fact that this 'heresy' erupted in Yugoslavia is due to extraneous circumstances rather than to any inherent differences of the Yugoslav Party. The chief of these was the consciousness of the Yugoslavs that they owed their liberation and the creation of their new regime solely to their own efforts.

THE SECOND REVOLUTION

While the Soviet rulers have been guilty of serious errors in the past, they can hardly be accused of inflexibility in remedying such mistakes or of dilatoriness in putting such remedies into effect. The 'second revolution'—or should it be counter-revolution? — became inevitable once Moscow had realised that the initial post-war revolutions in Eastern Europe had, from the Soviet point of view, failed in their purpose. This purpose was, first, to build a 'shock-absorber' with a dual function; to absorb the impact of a hostile ideology, i.e. a *cordon sanitaire* in reverse; and to create a system of alliances which, in the case of a Third World War, would provide a field of deployment of several hundred miles in depth, from which a hard-pressed Russian Army could gradually fall back upon the Riga-Odessa line; and, secondly, to create an economic organism at once self-supporting *and* complementary to the Soviet economy. The men of the Politbureau were shrewd enough to understand that both these aims could only be accomplished through the

more or less willing co-operation of the peoples concerned; they had learned their lesson from the Nazi débâcle that lasting empires are not built upon the labour of slaves, whose ultimate aim will always be revolt against their taskmasters.

Hence the original motto 'Socialism by various roads'; hence the divers 'national fronts' from the Baltic to the Black Sea between 1945 and 1948; hence also the apparent 'monolithic' condition of the Communist Parties of Eastern Europe. For as long as remnants of the 'class enemy' remained an integral part of these regimes, no divergences within the Party councils could be allowed to percolate into the rank and file. Until the end of 1947 Moscow seemed to have good reasons to believe that its aims were being achieved, despite unmistakable signs that all was not as 'monolithic' in the Party as official optimism would have people believe. Until the final elimination of all 'bourgeois elements' from the political and economic scene in these countries, it had always been possible to attribute signs of unrest and disillusionment with Soviet 'guidance' to 'reactionary trouble-makers'. But after spring 1948, this argument had worn too threadbare even for use by the Cominform propaganda machine. So after a short period of vacillation—shown in the far from wholehearted persecution of the Church which was always kept in reserve as an alternative whipping-boy—the Soviet rulers decided to drop the hunt for manifestly fictitious 'reactionary' plots and conspiracies, and to tackle the real 'enemy' in the leadership and the rank and file of the Communist Party: the nationalist Communists and the Communists demurring against the dogma of infallibility of the Russian Politbureau. It is at this point that the *volte-face* in the line of the Politbureau occurred, namely the open admission that a serious ideological split existed within the ranks of the allegedly monolithic Party itself. In short, what had happened inside Soviet Russia between 1927 and 1937, the physical extinction of a political and ideological opposition within the Party, is now being enacted on an international scale in those countries where the Soviet writ runs. Gomulka, Rajk, Kostov, Xoxe, Patrascanu, Clementis, Husak, Novomesky, and thousands of friends and followers of these old Communists, had to pay for the mistake of the Politbureau in assuming that adulation of the Kremlin was an effective substitute for a deeply-engrained nationalism and that the Soviet brand of Marxism could delude the revolutionary parties of these countries into believing that they had now reached the goal of the century-old struggle for social, economic and national emancipation.

The 'second revolution' is imposed from above in each of these countries by a handful of men who still believe—some of them quite sincerely—that no sacrifice is too great to preserve the goodwill of Moscow and that anything that benefits the Soviet Union is ultimately bound to redound to the greater happiness of their own peoples, even if no evidence of this can be found in present circumstances.

Only in one country has the 'second revolution' failed—Yugoslavia. And since the replacement of old and popular Communists by Moscow satraps is neither a haphazard nor a piecemeal process but the implementation of a new, rigid Politbureau 'line', it can be said that unless the carrying out of the second revolution 'from above' is a total success, it will eventually prove a total failure. Why? Because the ideological foundations of the Stalin regime, as well as its main prop in the eyes and minds of two hundred million Soviet citizens, is the conviction that there can be no Socialism outside the doctrinal bounds prescribed by the Kremlin, and that any non-conformist brand of Socialism is tantamount to heresy. It is only this dogma of black and white, of wickedness as opposed to infallible wisdom, of total perdition as against total salvation, which makes every word issuing from the Kremlin an *ex cathedra* pronouncement, doubt in which is equivalent to self-exclusion from the community. It is this dogma which has lifted the rulers of Soviet Russia high above the domain of poverty, squalor, overwork and undernourishment, into a lofty region beyond the carping criticism reserved for mere mortals.

Therefore, Tito has not merely defied Stalin; he is not merely an unruly underling

deciding to set up shop on his own. He is, in fact, calling in question the very foundation of Soviet rule by refuting the infallible wisdom of Moscow and by obstinately refusing to act up to the part of prodigal son for which Moscow and the Cominform cast him three years ago. We are not concerned here with the part hopefully allotted to Yugoslavia in the game of power politics by either East or West. We are merely saying that Soviet Russia is threatened to-day, not so much by the A-bomb or H-bomb or even by the creation of powerful combinations of states against her, as by the greatest danger to her internal structure since the time when Trotsky's insistence on carrying out Lenin's testament of world-wide revolution compelled Stalin to embark on history's greatest campaign of savagery in order to prove the correctness of the thesis of 'Socialism in one country'.

Today Tito's successful defiance of Moscow seems the greatest hope of avoiding World War III. For to Russia and her satellites it is immeasurably more important to fight the very real rot from within than to launch out on new ventures abroad which would lead the world to the brink of war. Such a war would confront Russia and her allies not only with an overwhelmingly powerful external enemy, but with a fatal centrifugal tendency of the Czech, Polish, Hungarian, Rumanian and Bulgarian Communist Parties to establish in their countries nationalist-Communist regimes following the Tito pattern, regimes pledged to use their countries' resources exclusively for the benefit of their own peoples. If ever they succeeded in this aim, it would in fact amount to the birth of a 'Third Force' in world politics which might yet interpose itself between the two incompatible giants —Russia and the United States.

For Moscow it is therefore of vital importance—in the long run it might well prove a question of life and death—to make the 'second revolution' more of a success than the first one has turned out to be. The enormity of this task is obvious. In the case of the immediate post-war revolutions it was merely a question of liquidating the 'class enemy', a process which the great majority of the people could be counted upon to assist. When this was at last accomplished, Moscow suddenly realised that there remained another foe obstinately blocking the final path to the establishment of Moscow's dominion over the eastern half of Europe: a nationalism which was not, as Moscow had believed, the characteristic of the defeated bourgeoisie of these countries, but which ineradicably permeated the workers and peasants who formed the backbone of progress toward Socialism in all countries east of the Elbe.

If the Russia of today were a truly Socialist power, as she continuously asserts, and not the exponent of the new twentieth-century imperialism, which she is today regarded by millions, she could and would have turned to good account this great, recently released force of a proud nationalism based on social and economic emancipation, by forming a loose yet intimate federation of independent Socialist states. But the very nature of Stalin's Russia, its expansionist aims and its hierarchic structure, its isolationist scale of moral and cultural values and its renunciation of the original principles of democracy as designed for use within the Communist Party by Lenin—all these have made such an approach impossible and have almost logically turned the new enlightened nationalism of Russia's natural allies into the Soviet Union's most formidable enemy. And the smouldering resentment of Russia's dependencies at the new domination and exploitation which have replaced the old orthodox capitalist domination and exploitation denounced by Marx, Engels and Lenin, may well contain the seeds of the ultimate fall of the new Byzantium.

RUSSIAN ARMED FORCES

There are far too many people who minimize the need for defence forces. If you give them the figures of the size of Russian armed strength—and the strength of the satellites—they do not believe them, because they do not want to believe them. The estimates of the British Military Intelligence of the size of the Russian armed forces are not guess work . . . When the Military Intelligence says that the Russians have got 215 divisions—175 line divisions and 40 supporting anti-aircraft and artillery divisions—there are very good grounds for saying so. These figures are supported by chapter and verse. No one but a fool would disregard these estimates.

MR. WOODROW WYATT, *Financial Secretary to the War Office*

'We must be treated as absolute equals'

THE CASE FOR EGYPT

GEORGE BILAINKIN

READING the comments in British and Egyptian newspapers on the continued failure of British and Egyptian politicians to agree on a revision of the Treaty (the four words 'of Friendship and Alliance' are seldom mentioned), I often wonder whether the spirit of the mirage has not overwhelmed sober personages in both countries.

For today, sixty-nine years since our invasion, conquest and uninterrupted military occupation of portions of Egypt, responsible writers declare that any new proposal to withdraw troops, in a given number of years, is 'a policy of scuttle'. The politicians, myopic and intelligent, either agree or do not challenge the phrase. In Egypt an equally large, or loud, number demand that the Treaty, signed in London on 26 August 1936, should not remain the subject of fruitless negotiations, but ought to be allowed to lapse in 1956, so that Great Britain could not have any excuse five years hence for retaining the ten- or fifty-thousand soldiers now stationed in the Fayid zone of the Suez Canal.[1]

With warmth the Egyptians argue that more vulnerable corners of the Middle East, countries nearer the Soviet Union, have recently resumed, or won, complete independence and sovereignty. They point to the insistence by Great Britain immediately after the war that both British and Soviet troops should evacuate Persia; the British left the country on 2 March 1946, and the Russians during May. Iraq was occupied by our troops and evacuated. Palestine was occupied and evacuated. Syria and Lebanon were occupied and evacuated.

It is disturbing to note here the development of a solemn conviction that silence, and maybe the capacity to turn the nose the other way while passing a field with over-ripe cabbages, will solve our visible, violent and mutually dangerous difficulties. Thus, as an example, let me cite the minor yet revealing incident of but a few months ago at the annual meeting in London of the Anglo-Egyptian Society. When, at the conclusion of the proceedings, it was suggested, under the heading 'Any other business' that perhaps, in future, the Council might substitute for the current policy of lectures on migrations of birds and the ballet, a series of talks on vital Anglo-Egyptian affairs, an audible silence followed. No one in the distinguished or more humble sections of the audience praised, criticised or commented. Indeed, the President, the present Egyptian Ambassador here, and several members of the Council looked astonished. The proposer did not know that before the meeting the Council had decided unanimously that later in 1951 lectures should have as much relevance to Anglo-Egyptian affairs as does an Aberdeen kipper.

Ostrich-itis does not, in this sense, exist in Egypt. Indeed, passionate articles and speeches are general. Emotion is scarcely the best guide to judgment and decision on past and present facts, some, if not many, disagreeable for both sides. Yet ultimately, whether the Anglo-Egyptian marriage goes on, or a divorce is arranged, or, as I hope, a new and happier association vitally needed by us both is begun, the facts will have to be considered afresh, squarely, in Britain as in Egypt. Maybe, therefore, the study of some elements of the Egyptian case can do little harm now, while time for calm discussion runs away with dangerous speed.

I cannot help recalling the phrase used by the late Nokrashy Pasha, then Saadist Prime Minister, as I pleaded in his office for 'candour and more candour'. Politely, but wearily, in a tone conveying only despair, he said: 'You must be prepared,

[1] Estimates of the number vary: the total permitted under the 1936 agreement was 10,000, but the figure may now be higher

surely, to know that publication of our case in your Press is out of the question?' It is fair to Nokrashy's memory to say that one periodical consented with pleasure to record sections of our interview: sex, sadism, sport, won in the bigger journals. His urgent plea for examination of the causes of the breakdown of the Anglo-Egyptian discussions in 1946, conducted at a distance of about 2,500 miles, remained unheard.

Let me turn to the earliest Anglo-Egyptian association before studying the developments of Egypt's desire to enjoy not only formal independence, but the elementary privilege of a Sovereign State in deciding that, all foreign troops, however friendly, however well behaved, however important to the State's budget and the national economy, must depart.

For ample reasons the Egyptians cannot yet get accustomed to the notion of real independence becoming their good (or in this uncertain world doubtful) fortune. For, to be conscious of the experience, they would have to dream of events in 343 B.C., when Ochus was about to overthrow by force the last native Egyptian dynasty. There followed a long line of Macedonians, Romans, Arabs, Turks, Berbers, Kurds, Mamluks, Osmanlis, French—and British. The servitude lasted twenty-three centuries—recalling Jer. xliii. 2: 'Then spake Azariah, the son of Hoshaiah and Johanan the son of Kareah and all the proud men, saying unto Jeremiah, Thou speakest falsely: the Lord our God hath not sent thee to say, Go not into Egypt to sojourn there . . .'

It was only in the eighteenth century that Great Britain began to take an interest in Egypt, till then part of the Turkish Empire. In 1807 our acquaintance was brief but sanguinary: British soldiers were marched as prisoners through Alexandria and were shown the heads of hundreds of their comrades, all exposed on stakes.

With the opening in 1869 of the Suez Canal, the country's importance grew enormously. As Alfred Milner reminds us[1] 'Egypt in the sixties and seventies was the happy hunting-ground of financiers and promoters of the shadiest description.' One instance was the loan of £32,000,000 which yielded only £20,700,000 in 1873. The compound interest was always seven per cent and in 1897 the £8,500,000 loan produced only £5,992,000. Loans were forced on the Egyptians who yearly paid vast sums as interest on the public debt. In 1880 the revenue was £8,998,000 and £3,972,000 was paid out on interest; in 1882 the respective figures were, £8,852,857 and £4,089,000; in 1885 the figures were still bad, 48.0 per cent of the revenue going to pay off the interest on the public debt. Soon shameless extravagance and financial incompetence forced Ismail to sell 176,602 of his shares to the British Government in 1875 for £4,080,000.[2]

With French covetousness spreading to North Africa, Britain turned more eagerly to Egypt. Then various avoidable and other economic difficulties led to the suspension of payment of the Egyptian Treasury Bills. British inquiries into the situation led to the establishment in May 1876 of a *Caisse de la Dette*. Mr. (later Lord) Goschen for British bondholders, and M. Joubert for the French, established a system of dual control, the former to supervise revenues, the latter expenditure. Later, control was assumed of the railways, also of the port of Alexandria, for a thousand years capital of older Egypt, and of the vast estates of the Khedive. The next development was the acceptance of a 'government' in which Mr. Rivers Wilson became Minister of Finance and M. de Blignieres the Minister of Works. Riots were arranged, and Ismail dismissed the foreign 'ministry'. The British and French appealed to Ismail's master, the Sultan, who promptly dispatched a wire addressed (on June 26, 1879) to the 'Ex-Khedive', nominating his son, Tewfiq, as successor. In November the British and French resumed dual control, for two years. An Egyptian's description of the condominium is worthy of record: 'Have you ever seen a dog and cat taking a mouse for a walk?'

Inevitably a spirit of revolt, the beginnings of Nationalism, became apparent. Its leader was a fellah officer, who was chosen Under-Secretary-for-War and then a member of the Cabinet, Arabi Pasha.

[1] 'England In Egypt' 1 . . . [2] In a recent year the shares brought £1,410,000 to our Treasury in dividends and in 1948 their market value was stated to be £27,815,000

The British and French grew more concerned, and their fleets arrived off Alexandria in May 1882. This had surprising results, and in June, fifty Christians were killed during riots, including a British naval officer. Correctly the British asked the French to join in the landing of troops; they refused. The Italians also refused. The Sultan was unwilling to call a conference of ambassadors in Constantinople. Arabi resumed work on the batteries at Alexandria; he reinforced the garrison, and the Nationalists 'called a levee en masse'.[1]

Sir Beauchamp Seymour, the British Admiral, demanded on 6 July that all the work be stopped 'though none was being done at the moment. Three days later, on information that work was being resumed, the Admiral notified the consuls that he would open fire in twenty-four hours, unless all the forts were surrendered . . . the Sultan begged for more time to consider his action, which was refused. At 7 a.m. on 11 July fire was opened, and by 5.30 p.m. the forts were practically destroyed. The Egyptian troops then retired, leaving Alexandria in flames, to be looted by the mob, during which disorders several Europeans were murdered. Thereafter British marines were landed and order was restored.'

Sir George Young comments later: 'Sir Beauchamp Seymour's guns shattered more important structures than the ancient stone forts of Mehemet Ali. The bombardment almost shook down the British Government. Bright resigned and Gladstone was forced by Chamberlain and Hartington to abandon his pacifist principles, as usual covering his change of direction with a smoke-screen of verbiage. . . .'

Cairo was occupied on 15 September and it was said in London[2] of the victory of Tel-el-Kebir: 'It is an achievement as brilliant, as complete and as easily purchased as any that has ever graced British arms.' Vienna newspapers spoke of 'annexation', while *Reynolds News* described Gladstone as 'nothing better than an arch old hypocrite' and published a series of highly dramatised allegations about the behaviour of our troops in the conquered cities towards the end of the fighting. Controversy followed, in the *Daily Telegraph*, in *The Times*, and Sir W. Lawson[3] epitomised the views of sections of the population. He declared that the Prime Minister had said that we went to war to keep up the rights of the Sultan, the rights of the Khedive, the rights of the people of Egypt and the rights of the bondholders. Were these proper objects, he asked, for which to spend the treasure and the blood of a free nation? What rights had the Sultan in Egypt? Did anyone know the good the Khedive had done? The first right of any nation was the right to govern itself . . .

Arabi was tried for three and a half minutes, pleaded guilty to some charges, was sentenced to death and promptly dispatched with eight chiefs, nineteen women and female children and fifteen male children, to rest in Colombo. He was provided with five houses and his companions were granted allowances of £400 to £800 (which makes Mr. Gordon-Walker's £1000 for Seretse Kama seem paltry).

Gladstone told Parliament on 14 November 1882: 'The occupation is only provisional.'

Chamberlain, President of the Board of Trade, said a few days later, on 19 December, at Ashton-under-Lyne: 'I shall not waste my time dealing with the suggestion that the Government desires to maintain a perpetual protectorate over Egypt . . . Once order is established we shall retire.'

Dilke, Under Secretary, Foreign Office, said on 9 August 1883, in the Commons: 'The Government is opposed to the annexation of Egypt, and everything that resembles that . . .'

Harcourt, Home Secretary, said at Derby on 15 April 1884: 'Britain has not the intention to annex Egypt . . . We shall evacuate Egypt so soon as security and tranquillity are assured.'

Gladstone[4] told electors in the manifesto of 18 September 1895: 'England should withdraw from Egypt as soon as British honour will permit. We will never admit that there could be any question of annexation.'

All the promises notwithstanding, on 18 December 1914, a British Protectorate

24 [1] p. 121, 'Egypt,' Sir George Young, 1927 [2] *The Times*, 14 September, 1882 [3] *The Times*, 3 March, 1883.
[4] The collection provided for me in Cairo by Saad Kamel Bey, is almost endless, but I quote a few of the examples he gathered for his Prime Minister

was declared; it came to an end on 28 February 1922 and Sultan Ahmed Fuad was proclaimed 'King of independent Egypt'. Failure on the part of the occupying Power to raise the question of Egypt's future at the conferences following Versailles, had led to Nationalist conflicts, and, a rising in 1919, when various Egyptian leaders were deported.

In 1936 the British military occupation was formally concluded, ambassadors being formally accredited at the Courts of St. James's and Cairo. The Treaty recognised special British interests in the defence of the Suez Canal zone, and the administration of the Sudan remained in accordance with the Condominium agreement of 1899. In 1937 the humiliating Capitulations in Egypt were ended by agreement.

Nahas Pasha, then leader of the Nationalist (Wafd) Party and his fellow delegates arrived to sign a treaty after five failures to agree.

In the light of recent statements in Egypt about the 'complete ending of the alliance' in 1956, attention might well be drawn here to interpretations of the Treaty by Mr. Eden and by *The Times* published in 1936. The Foreign Secretary told Parliament, 'Even if the Treaty is revised, such revision must provide for the continuance of the alliance in accordance with the principles of Article 7 . . .'

The signature of the Treaty was announced[1] under these headings, *The Egyptian Treaty; A Perpetual Alliance.* In a leader[2] it was said unequivocally, on what I believe to be the highest authority (without any denial following from the Egyptians): 'Even more important are the articles that deal with the eventual revisions of the military clauses of the Alliance. These remain in force twenty years, and at the end of that period the question whether the Egyptian Army is fit to take over the defence of the Canal is to be submitted, if the contracting parties disagree, to the arbitration of the League of Nations, of which Egypt will shortly become a Member. But the decision of the Council or any revision of the terms of the Alliance will make no difference to its maintenance.'

Lord Lloyd, of course, called the treaty 'little less than a stampede',[3] and murmurings began in Egypt suggesting that Nahas Pasha had surrendered too much.

Naturally, when Hitler struck at Europe Allied troops occupied Egypt in greater numbers than hitherto. The Egyptians helped the Western Powers, but did not at first declare war against Germany or Italy. The diplomatic missions of the Axis Powers were for a time highly useful to the enemy. But, in August 1941, following the issue of the declaration later to be known as the Atlantic Charter, Egyptians' hopes rose: did the words of President Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill not promise in clause three much to cheer Egypt? 'To see their self-government and rights as independent nations given back to those from whom they have been taken away by force . . .' The Egyptians did not have to wait long for an awakening from their dreams. The momentary fortunes of war brought German troops too near Cairo for the comfort of the Allied governments.

About nine p.m. on 4 February 1942, when Rommel was advancing, British troops surrounded Abdin Palace; three tanks crashed through the gates and entered the courtyard. Five minutes later the British Ambassador, (now) Lord Killearn, accompanied by the G.O.C. British troops, Major General R. G. Stone, walked into King Farouk's study. Farouk who had received Killearn's ultimatum at noon, to expire at six p.m., agreed, in a few minutes, under threat of forcible removal to the Seychelles or to Mauritius, to call on Nahas Pasha to form a Cabinet.[4]

Farouk had called for four p.m. a conference of former premiers and elder-statesmen. They decided, Nahas voting, 'that the British ultimatum constituted a major violation of the Anglo-Egyptian treaty, and of Egypt's independence, and that the King could not, therefore, consent to an act which resulted in the violation of the pact or the independence of the State.'

Egyptians cried as they had not cried before, and Farouk told Killearn he would regret the day.

It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the passions felt in 1946, and later

[1] *The Times*, 28 August
[2] *The Times*, same date
[3] *The Times*, 26 November, 1936, Lords debate
[4] pp. 52–67 *Cairo to Riyadh Diary*, London, 1950

about the Anglo-Egyptian association, were intimately linked with the events of 1942, when our prestige was at its lowest. Field Marshal Lord Wilson of Libya has described his reactions to our (then) Ambassador and to the ultimatum[1]:

'I was astounded and horrified at the news, as one felt that all one's efforts at getting the goodwill and co-operation of the Egyptians in the early days of the war had been thrown away. I returned to Syria with the impression that the personal equation had had a good deal to do with it.'

Dealing with the subsequent episode in 1943 arising out of the publication in Egypt by an Egyptian Minister, Makram Obeid Pasha, of the *Black Book*, Wilson says that it accused Nahas of 'contriving at corrupt practices alleged to have been carried out by his family as well as others connected with the Government; the scope of the alleged malpractices covered dealings in a variety of subjects, from ladies' apparel to passport visas and contracts. On the *Black Book* becoming public the King expressed a desire to dismiss the Government; our Ambassador advised him not to take such a course. . .'

Wilson had cause later on for further alarm, he says, for the situation was taking a trend 'which might lead to our troops being called upon to take forcible action against the King. I was astounded at the news.' He reported, therefore, at once to our Minister of State in Cairo that 'it would be impossible for me to agree to any military action against the King in view of the effects it might have on "Husky" preparations.'

Wilson comments that it would have been 'disastrous to repeat the questionable procedure' of 4 February 1942, 'as the repercussions might involve the British in a fight with the Egyptian Army.' Nor is this all. For the problem of prestige in the East is important. This is Wilson's opinion: 'At the time of the *Black Book* crisis our intelligence reported that our stock had fallen very low, and that the British were being accused of supporting a lot of crooks (the unfortunate thing was that some of the people mentioned in the *Black Book* often visited our Embassy). The matter came up before the Middle East War Council presided over by Casey, at which there was a heated argument between our Ambassador and we three service chiefs; the former was upset that we were not prepared to support him by military action though he stated that he did not wish to go so far but we were aware that the expression "military action" had appeared in some of his draft signals to the Foreign Office and had subsequently been deleted . . .'

Wilson also mentions matters that were sternly censored at the time, and, like my own account of the Abdin Palace scenes, had not previously been described in this country. He says, '. . . the state of tension that had grown up between the Palace on one side and the Government, backed by our Embassy on the other, had been the subject of Cairo talk for quite a time; reports as to the state of feeling engendered were disturbing from the security angle, even though the loudest talkers were the British civilian element who did not wish to have the name of Britain associated with the alleged perpetrators of dirty business.'[2]

On 7 May 1946, Viscount Stansgate, who deputised for Mr. Bevin, opened the talks by announcing three weeks after his arrival in Cairo as temporary head of the delegation, 'The United Kingdom has proposed to withdraw all British naval, military and air forces from Egyptian territory'. It must be remembered that Nokrashy had asked Bevin in December 1945 for the talks on revision to begin. Demonstrations, on 10 February 1946, underlined Egyptian impatience; on 21 February British vehicles were destroyed in Cairo and our troops opened fire; on 4 March two British soldiers and twenty-nine others were killed in Alexandria, 324 persons being injured. On Sunday, 7 April, Lady Killearn held a sale by auction in the the Embassy, of Lord Killearn's 'household goods and valuable Chinese *objets d'art*'. Mr. Bevin dispatched Stansgate and a much milder ambassador. The treaty talks went on for a long time, but everything had to be referred back to Mr. Bevin in London. They broke down. They have broken down several times since.

[1] p. 129, *Eight years Overseas*, 1949

[2] p. 159, *Eight Years Overseas*

It is easy to state Egypt's case. But it must not be assumed that the British record is without many splendid pages. First and foremost Britain succeeded in avoiding the development of the country along the old Balkan lines. Egypt has a middle-class democracy. The barriers and dams are a superb example of Western science helping to enrich the country. The cotton industry is a monument. Several agricultural revolutions are evidence of characteristically British co-operation. The police system is British. The Army has been founded on British patterns. The roads, the sanitation, the modern houses and offices, are all largely the result of British intervention. The larger modern schools and universities, though supplying but a fragment of Egypt's needs, owe much to British inspiration. Several specialist schools are either British-controlled or British-inspired, and offer, in my view, a testimonial of permanent greatness.

Today Egypt suffers from under-nourishment, from under-education, from insufficient sanitation, from a shortage of trained medical personnel. The pressure of population is scarcely credible. Of its 388,000 square miles, Egypt has only 13,000 square miles, the area of Belgium, cultivable. Most of the 20,000,000 inhabitants are pathetically poor tillers of the soil. The density per square mile for the land is 1,172, compared with 172 in Scotland, 750 in well-organised England and Wales, and 39 in rich, industrially ahead, Sweden. Egypt needs disinterested friends, who will give technical help without the strings that were attached in the nineteenth century.

Let me quote a distinguished Egyptian, a friend of this country's. 'We want and need British expert aid. We need British capital. We need British films. We need British teachers. We need British books. But we must be treated as absolute equals. We want to see British troops go, not because we want Communism—far from it, for we are Moslems—and not because we want anyone else in their place. We want to see only Egyptians with arms on our soil in peacetime. We want the same sense of independence that you enjoy in Britain. If war should come you would find less enthusiasm for the Western cause because the presence on the Canal Zone of troops nullifies our sense of national freedom. But if the troops were not there, Egypt would consider the situation in a wholly different light. Is it not better to have a real friend as ally?'

Mr. Herbert Morrison has now had time to reconsider the situation in the light of the new strategic conception. The Suez is highly vulnerable; Cyprus and Crete can well take the place of Fayid, in 'peace' time. I hope he will act with courage and without bitterness, with foresight and without passion.

AN AMERICAN VIEW

'In the event of war the friendship of the Middle East would be of enormous strategical value. The first interest of the U.S. in the Middle East, as everywhere, therefore, is its people, 90 million of them. Middle East policy also has some indirect effect on the rest of the Moslem world, some 200 million people, outside of Russia and China, who live between Morocco and the Philippines. . . .

After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in World War I, the Middle East came largely under the colonial dominance of England and France. The position of France in Syria and Lebanon disappeared in World War II; Britain's continued decline leaves the vacuum in which the power of Soviet Russia and the U.S. is presently felt. The U.S., never a colonial power, and not interested in becoming one, has had here, as in virtually every other part of the world, the responsibility imposed upon it of exercising a political wisdom superior to the Greeks or the Romans or the British.'—

Fortune, August 1951

The problem of the Schools is fundamentally a problem of the position of the Church

SCHOOLS AND POLITICS IN FRANCE

FRANÇOIS GOGUEL

THE French general elections of 17 June produced a decided, and, in a sense unexpected, majority for the Coalition of Centre parties which have been in power for the last four years. The Coalition had consisted of Socialists, Popular Republicans (M.R.P.) and Radicals, whose more moderate elements had found a common interest in withstanding the intransigence of the Gaullist party. When the National Assembly met on 5 July, it included 120 Gaullists, 101 Communists, 107 Socialists 100 Moderates, 95 M.R.P. and 90 Radicals.

On 10 July the Assembly elected M. Edouard Herriot as its President. The choice of President of the Assembly is traditionally political, and M. Herriot is a staunch partisan of the Centre Coalition against the dual opposition of Communist and Gaullist. It is significant that he received even more votes than in the previous Assembly. Nevertheless it is still a matter of speculation whether the majority which emerged from the elections will ever be able to function. In other words, those who were elected under a system of Alliances designed to protect parliamentary institutions both against the Communist concept of 'popular' democracy and the Gaullist trend towards personal authority, may in fact create a paralysis of government in the very system they proposed to safeguard.

The difficulties confronting the newly elected Assembly were not entirely unexpected.[1] There were two main factors at work. First, public opinion has crystallised into a multiplicity of parties which tend to become more and more rigid in structure. Secondly, the Constitution requires that the President-designate of Council must obtain a formal vote of confirmation before proceeding to form a Cabinet. The creation of a majority coalition is therefore indispensable but a difficult and lengthy business to achieve. Each party tries to induce its eventual partners to accept considerable limitations of their programmes, in order to reduce its own eventual concessions. There is thus a general display of instransigence, in which it is difficult to distinguish the part played by tactics. Even in 1946, after the elections to the last Assembly, the vote of confirmation was refused to M. Thorez and M. Bidault, both leaders of the largest parties, in the previous coalition. Recourse was had to the expedient of creating a minority 'caretaker' government under Léon Blum, which was composed exclusively of Socialists. It was not possible to form a coalition government under M. Ramadier until January 1947, more than two months after the elections. So the situation in July and August was not without precedent. Unfortunately, there is no longer a politician commanding such universal respect as Leon Blum. Moreover, the evolution of the political and economic situation in France during the past five years has created an infinite complexity of relationships between the parties, and the range of possible alliances shifts dramatically according to the nature of the problem to be dealt with.

If it is a question of 'defending the Republic', that is to say, not so much given institutions, but a certain attitude to public life and the nature of government, then all the parties, excluding the Communists and the Gaullists, proclaim their unity. But they are far from agreement on the nature of the modifications to the 1946 constitution which would enable it to function more effectively. The Socialists and many Republicans are reluctant to

[1] See *World Review*, June 1951

support any increase of authority for the Executive, and particularly any revival of the power of unconditional dissolution, which has not existed in France for a hundred years. They are still more unwilling to follow the Moderates and Radicals, who would like to increase the powers of the Council of the Republic, since the methods by which this is elected tend to favour the conservative elements. They are, at any rate, united in believing that a genuine democracy is incompatible either with a Presidential régime—which Frenchmen, since Louis Napoleon, have always regarded as the first step to a personal dictatorship—or with the Communist concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat. They also agree that it would be desirable to suppress some of the provisions of the 1946 Constitution, which experience has shown to be cumbersome, such as the vote of confirmation by a given majority for the President-designate.

But apart from Constitutional questions, there is the problem of the schools, which is, fundamentally, a problem of the position of the Church. And here the potential alignments of the parties are radically different, each group within the coalition tending to approximate more or less to the position held by one or other of the opposition parties. The majority of the Radicals and all the Socialists wish, like the Communists, to maintain at all costs the scholastic régime of the Third Republic, which forbids the allocation of any public funds, whether national, departmental or communal, to the free, that is the Church, schools. The M.R.P., the Moderates and a minority of Radicals, on the other hand, think with the Gaullists that the existing legislation should be amended.

In social and economic matters both Moderates and Radicals are strictly liberal. They are believers in free enterprise; they are against the nationalisation of certain forms of production, public supervision of private business or any control of prices or salaries. Socialists and M.R.P., on the other hand, complain that the considerable increase in production that has been achieved in the last four years has not materially improved the standard of life of the working classes. They hold, therefore, that it is essential to remedy this state of affairs by legislation and to regulate the national economy more strictly. The Socialists nowadays are demanding a sliding scale for salaries which would secure their automatic and proportionate adjustment to fluctuations in the cost of living. Those of the M.R.P. who have close connections with the Christian Trade Unions are in favour of such proposals, but the majority are afraid that such a sliding scale would merely increase inflationary pressures which are more to the advantage of the industrialist than to the salaried worker. They tend to be in favour of a more differentiated form of state intervention such as a considerable increase in family allowances as well as the provision of anti-trust legislation.

The Communists are naturally in favour of the sliding scale, but try to outbid their rivals in the figures they propose for the minimum wage. The position of the Gaullists is far from clear. In their election programme they devoted a great deal of time to attacking State intervention in economic affairs, just like the Liberals. But since they support a programme of massive and autonomous rearmament, which is clearly impossible without strict economic controls, and also put forward plans for a closer association between Labour and Capital, it is evident that, on the whole, they cannot be included amongst the defenders of Liberal capitalism.

As a matter of fact, it is the schools question which has up till now been the focus of political attention.

The problem is, indeed, extremely complex, both in its technical and political aspects. The Third Republic secularised all State schools, except in Alsace and Lorraine, where earlier legislation still applies. Otherwise, schools which come under the local or national authority are free of ecclesiastical supervision, do not include religious instruction in their curriculum, and may not employ teachers who are members of any religious order. This legislation, which was in the main the work of Jules Ferry, has become almost

sacrosanct. It has for long been the hallmark of 'true Republicans', the bond of union between the more moderate (like Poincaré) and the more advanced (like Jaurès or Léon Blum).

But the Third Republic accepted the principle of freedom of education—in other words, the right, subject to evidence of competence, to open private schools. Parents sending their children to such schools are considered to have absolved their duties with regard to compulsory education. These 'free' schools are largely Catholic. The number of pupils of elementary grade attending these schools is almost one million, as compared with more than four million attending the State schools. In about twenty departments (out of ninety), principally in the West and in parts of the Jura, the Alps, the *Massif Central* and the Pyrenees, the 'free' schools are very well attended, often attracting more pupils than the State schools, and arousing a passionate loyalty amongst the Catholic population. In other parts of the country the old prejudices of the faithful against the secular school seem to have disappeared, since the type of education provided is not anti-religious but genuinely neutral. But where, on the other hand, the Catholic schools are numerous and popular, the State school is often a centre of anti-religious feeling.

But the 'free' schools are expensive to maintain, and a new factor of major importance has arisen. The social classes who formerly supported the schools financially, that is, the upper middle class and landed gentry, have been greatly impoverished. Teachers' salaries in these schools are very low and families called upon to contribute to the cost are annoyed that the taxes which they are already paying should go exclusively to the support of schools to which they refuse, on religious grounds, to send their children.

Hence the arguments in favour of making the legislation more flexible. The principle of freedom of education which was accepted by the Third Republic and confirmed by the Fourth, is only a pretence if economic conditions do not permit the exercise of this freedom. Social justice requires that the State should see to it that the teachers in the 'free' schools get a fair salary just like any other workers. But this is not possible without financial aid to the schools. Further, in many places the school population has increased considerably beyond the level of the period between the wars; the recruitment of teachers has diminished, and the State schools would not in fact be able to provide places for all the children if the free schools were not there. It is therefore reasonable that the free schools should ask for State support.

On the other hand, the partisans of the completely secular school maintain that if an adequate proportion of the Budget had been devoted to school construction and teachers' salaries, this situation would not have arisen, and therefore not a farthing of the money available for the needs of State education should be diverted from that purpose. All further arguments in favour of the free schools are met by an intransigent affirmation of the inviolable character of the 1880 legislation, and the statement (which is subjectively quite untrue for at least a quarter of France) that the State school, secular and neutral, is the proper school for all French children.

It is probable that there is a slight majority throughout the country in favour of the maintenance of the existing school system. But since the recent electoral law has weakened Communist representation in Parliament, there would no doubt be a slight majority, composed of the R.P.F., the Moderates, M.R.P. and some Radicals, in favour of giving some help to the free schools. However this majority could only be constituted on this particular problem.

Some parliamentary supporters of this view, the Radicals and M.R.P., would like to see the question settled quietly, without undue offence to secular susceptibilities, for instance by making state aid dependent on an efficient supervision of teaching competence and the hygiene of school buildings. Others seem to lay more weight on securing a symbolic victory as a revenge for the long years of waiting when there seemed no hope for Catholics of securing any modification of the law. Their tactics

make the position of more moderate reformers rather difficult.

Perhaps the most important factor is that the whole problem provides the R.P.F. with a most effective weapon for preventing the emergence of the majority coalition which does in fact exist in the present Assembly. It makes full use of this advantage by outbidding the more moderate claims of Catholics who are anxious not to envenom the debate.

But these Gaullist tactics have not disarmed the Socialist opposition. The Socialist party numbers a great many teachers amongst its active members. Since it has been ousted from its former working-class strongholds by the Communists, and to a lesser but marked degree by the Popular Republicans and the Gaullists, it has tended to revive its old anti-clerical programmes in the Centre and South. It seems therefore probable that if a very moderate Radical like M. René Mayer has refused to make any serious concessions on the point to the M.R.P., it is because he wished to conciliate the Socialists. It was the absence of Socialist support for his economic programme in the autumn of 1949 which compelled M. Mayer to abandon his attempt to form a government, even though he had been confirmed by the Assembly by a considerable majority. But his attempts to overcome the obstacle which had previously impeded his efforts have only succeeded in creating another which is equally decisive, in the abstention of the M.R.P. and the majority of Moderates.

The M.R.P., however, would like to preserve its association and alliance with the Socialists in all other fields, particularly in defence of parliamentary institutions and the interests of salaried workers. The M.R.P. have therefore suggested that the next Government should not take any official stand on the school problem, and leave any propositions on the subject, which might emerge from the Assembly, to the free vote of its members. It would thus be possible to limit the temporary majority which would be formed by the accession of the R.P.F. and the withdrawal of all the Socialist and some Radicals to this single question.

Admittedly it would be inconvenient if the Minister of Education were not able to intervene in the House on the technical, pedagogic or health aspects of the proposed aid, and on the question of the supervision of the free schools, even if it were only for the sake of avoiding any confusion in the public mind between the private schools, which are commercial enterprises, and the State service.

On the other hand, the Socialists cannot accept the M.R.P. formula, since their only hope of carrying the day in view of the actual parliamentary majority in favour of revision, is to make the maintenance of the present legislation a question of Government.

The problem has become all the more prickly in that one half the membership of the *conseils généraux* (County Councils) is due, in principle, to be renewed this October, on the system of individual candidatures with two ballots. The Popular Republicans and Radicals of similar views fear that if they have not, by then, obtained some show of satisfaction for the free schools, they will lose a great number of Catholic electors to the R.P.F. But the Socialists and other Radicals are equally worried lest they should lose the votes of the more uncompromisingly secular to the Communists.

It is considerations of this nature, added to the Frenchman's inordinate love of political controversies which raise, or appear to raise, philosophic issues, which help to explain the immense political importance which the schools question has suddenly acquired. It should, incidentally, be added that the fact that for years everyone has agreed that there was no problem to discuss does not precisely facilitate a solution.

There should, however, be no mistake. If the schools question had not arisen, equally serious difficulties would have been created by the economic programme, particularly the question of a sliding scale for salaries. The Socialists are undergoing one of their periodic attacks of wanting to go into opposition in order to renew their youth. This is all the stronger in that, owing to the progress of the Liberals (Moderates and Radicals), it is now

possible to throw the onus of power on to them, making them responsible for seeking, at a price, the agreements which would make a coalition possible. The M.R.P., too, are not far from sharing the Socialist point of view on this. Both parties have for four years been making concessions to the Liberals since they lacked the necessary votes to give them a majority in the Assembly. Neither would be averse to seeing the position reversed, so that they could, in their turn, impose their own terms.

But the Liberals, who represent rather less than a half of the Centre majority, are not unanimous. Some of them hope that the R.P.F. will lose some of its members through its intransigence, and that these will come to swell an eventual 'anti-Marxist' majority. But will the M.R.P. lend itself to such a programme? Other Liberals, on the contrary, are genuinely anxious to find common ground with the Socialists.

The R.P.F. itself is hoping that a prolonged impotence of the Centre parties will enable it to recruit sufficient dissidents from Moderate, Radical, Popular Republican and even Socialist ranks, to get a secure hold of power.

But all these are possibilities, and rather uncertain possibilities, at that. The real situation is that we have an incohesive majority, elected through the vice of a badly conceived electoral system, without any common political programme other than the rejection of certain concepts of government. The twentieth century is too harsh an epoch to tolerate too long indulgence in doctrinal controversy and intransigence of principle. Public opinion is still astonishingly indulgent to the tortuous skirmishing of its representatives. The *Tour de France*, the vacations, the weather forecasts, are much more interesting than politics, more particularly as economic prosperity seems assured and the international situation less menacing. With the return of winter and the renewed difficulties of existence, the State will have to prepare a Budget. The parties which hold a majority in the Assembly will be compelled to work out a common policy, perhaps after the formation of a transitional government, charged with the sole duty of settling the schools question. If this is not possible, they must admit their impotence and proceed to fresh elections.

Since M. Goguel wrote this article, M. Pleven's Coalition Government carried through the Assembly, by 370 votes to 238, a Bill enabling the State to make grants-in-aid to the 'free' schools. The majority of the Radical-Socialists, one of the Coalition parties, voted against the Bill, as did the Socialists and the Communists. The Socialists, according to The Times *Paris Correspondent, took it in very bad part.*

WHITE WINE

Baudelaire wrote hack reviews on white wine
The streets of Paris beckon in the dream
The trotting heels of whores sound
Like the diapason of a lost theme.

The road is my ruin, the book my drug
I am the phoenix flying in the night.
The wound of the wanderer is my scheme
Eyes of the lion are my delight.

WREY GARDINER

A scrambling decade, yes; but a breathing space of possibility

A MAN OF 'THE THIRTIES'

GEOFFREY GRIGSON

THE year of my birth was 1905, so I do not yet feel ancient. But I observe myself to be one of those forced into a temporal uniform, on which a label has been stitched proclaiming that I am—which again I do not feel myself to be, altogether—a Man of the Thirties; and perhaps there are only particular seats and carriages which a man with this large Three-O on his back should be allowed to occupy. All the same, a Man of the Thirties may perhaps be permitted a retrospective examination.

Ironically, he observes the political warfare of letters repeating itself. As a very young man, he may have had no use for what he called the hedgerow poetry of Mr. Edmund Blunden. He rejected such Georgian optimism. He recalls the Imagists and wonders what has happened to H.D. or Mr. F. S. Flint. He remembers now that the lieutenants of T. S. Eliot (though not the Master himself) were sceptical about the new poetic style and formalism of the Thirties, made their reservations about W. H. Auden, and believed that a triumph of free verse was then betrayed. He may recall Swift telling Stella about the emergence of a new young poet—'Pox on him, I must do something for him, and get him out of the way. I hate to have any new wits rise, but when they do rise I would encourage them; but they tread on our heels and thrust us off the stage.'

An old story told in a new way, since our span—if so inclusive a term can be allowed—has been unusually divided up into those short tribal times or periods, each with its label, Twenties, Thirties, Forties, each with its distinctive heroes, loyalties and rejections. Yet if you examine them, the boundaries are not really so definite. These boundaries, up to a point, are drawn, and these labels affixed as a convenience by literary journalism, although the shifting of loyalties is a symptom of the disease, or at any rate of the process of muddle around revolution. Two mountain ranges stand up: the first and the second wars. The Twenties and the Thirties lie in the rough valley between them, but there are, of course, passes over each range.

When a young commentator on this side of the second range refers opprobriously to the Thirties, the demoded hero he has in mind is W. H. Auden, as though Auden had been fossilised and left down in the valley. The demoded poetry he has in mind is 'political' poetry with a Left bias, though in fact the amount of such poetry was small, and the best of it was political only on the surface. The commentator of the Forties or Fifties has, in fact, taken over another of the categorisations of hostile journalism. If you look at the years between 1930 and 1939, there were several 'Thirties', not a single one. There were, for example, Oxford Thirties and Cambridge Thirties. The Oxford Thirties were fertile (I should say); the Cambridge Thirties were dry. The Oxford Thirties poured out poems; the Cambridge Thirties devised criticism and on the whole disliked the poems, the prodigality, the fertility, the healthy mixture of energy and, if you like, vulgarity. On the one side W. H. Auden and Louis MacNeice, on the other William Empson and F. R. Leavis; on the one side *New Verse*, on the other *Scrutiny*, both of them children, with an emphatic difference of temperament and character, of Mr. T. S. Eliot's *Criterion*.

* * *

So far as *New Verse* is to the point, I can at least speak of it with certainty, since I invented *New Verse* and was its editor and publisher up to the last number in 1939. If with the recollection of this periodical in your mind, I say first of all that the Oxford Thirties were distinguished by generosity, the Cambridge Thirties by a closed system of dogmas, you may laugh and reply that the editor has forgotten what his paper contained, the tribal warfare, the cuts with

the bill hook, the reviews under such headings as 'Flip-flap-flop, or a Wet Whiting', or 'A Little Pig's Tale' for a book of forgotten poems the title of which was *Straight or Curly*. There are two answers. *New Verse* existed in the margin. It published many of the Oxford poets, but was not controlled by them so much as by its editor's idiosyncrasy. Also the savagery of *New Verse* was defence by offence. It was defence of that space in which there were poems and in which other poems and poets might follow. If you were to turn to the number for June 1935, you would see in a report headed 'Literature Speaks Out' the contemptuous assault which every poet from Eliot to Auden might incur at that time—Mr. Priestley declaring: 'It would have been better for contemporary English literature if Eliot had stayed in Louisville, or wherever he came from'; Mr. Blunden wondering why Eliot had 'to feel so badly about things'; Humbert Wolfe announcing that Auden was no poet and Eliot a poet who cannot write poetry. That isolation of the new poetry in the Thirties is now forgotten, comfortably; and though a savage return in kind may not have been the wisest policy, it can, I think on a backward glance, be understood and even excused. Politically, moreover, *New Verse* was so little a journal of the extreme Left as to earn a slash from Moscow in 1936 on account of what D. S. Mirsky called Catholic propaganda for Gerard Manley Hopkins, entering into a bloc with the French surrealists and 'hounding Day Lewis' for 'an excess of Communist loyalty'; to which the editor replied that *New Verse* was never Left Wing or Right Wing and was not founded as a Wing journal. And it was about as Catholic as Mr. Roy Campbell is humanist.

So far as generosity went, *New Verse*—or the editor of *New Verse*—came to feel more and more that the central and only viable attitude, which was to be defended if necessary by the sharpest cuts at those who condemned it, was that of its chief contributor—Auden's 'We must love one another or die'; and, goodness knows, nothing which has happened since has made that imperative the less central. More narrowly, *New Verse* stood for a sharply-minted language of verse, by which I mean Christopher Smart's 'beauty force, and vehemence of *Impression*'—'For my talent is to give an impression upon words by punching, that when the reader casts his eye upon 'em, he takes up the image from the mould [sic] I have made.' It believed that language was an object to be observed no less than any other, that scholarship, good sense and coherence were desirable, and that the intelligent poet (though he may not write 'intellectual' poetry) was to be preferred to the neo-pastoral or neo-romantic loony.

* * *

The Oxford Thirties felt in their Cambridge counterparts not only aridity but jealousy, such as you may see in William Empson's poem 'Just a Smack at Auden'. Both admired T. S. Eliot, but to the Oxford Thirties it seemed that the Cambridge critics isolated certain critical pronouncements by Eliot and exaggerated them into ungenerous and exclusive dogmas. Mr. Eliot had come down from the mountain with the tables of the law which must then be applied with the rigidity of a Communist ruling clique. I have just been reading again Mr. Empson's *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, which was derived, it would be fair to say, from Eliot (and Robert Graves) by way of I. A. Richards. It appeared—how disturbing to reflect—twenty-two years ago, and although it is by far the best *written* bible of Cambridge criticism, though from beginning to end it offers many clear and rewarding perceptions of the nature of English poetry, I felt once more an old revulsion from a style of writing and of criticism which is scurfy and bloodless or can easily be made so by its devotees. The analysis of *The Windhover* by Gerard Manley Hopkins, for example, still seems to me ingeniously misdirected by the intellect and uninformed by a reading of the senses. A reading of the senses would never have attributed to the poem ambiguities which cannot have been in the mind of the poet. Hopkins wrote of the hovering and plunging kestrel:

> Brute beauty and valour and act, oh air, pride, plume, here
> Buckle . . .

The question of ambiguity, Mr. Empson

declared, was whether 'buckle' meant that these things—the bird's beauty, valour, act, pride and plume, and the air—buckled tensely together like the buckling of a belt, or whether 'buckle' implied uselessness and distortion, derived from the buckling of a bicycle wheel. It did not occur to Mr. Empson that a poet writing in 1877 was not likely to have much experience of the buckling of bicycle wheels. It did not occur to him also that familiarity with the thing, if you like the hedgerow thing Hopkins wrote about, the kestrel hovering, hurling and gliding, rebuffing the big wind and hovering again, would at once do away with an ambiguity in the word.

I do not mean to poke fun at Mr. Empson's book by isolating and ridiculing a single example of his method, but it was not a method which appealed to the other party. Also the exclusive dogmatism of Cambridge delivered by writers far less skilful than Mr. Empson, in a stiff and cliché-ridden prose, again made no appeal to those who were spawning poem upon poem in the Thirties. This dogmatism—which continues—drew up canons of poetry or canons of fiction. If you agreed with the canon, salvation was yours; if you disagreed, damnation and excommunication. The Cambridge Thirties pronounced that there could be no poetry without an audience; the Oxford Thirties believed there could be no poetry without poems, which incautiously and prodigally they proceeded to supply. The Cambridge Thirties deified Mr. Eliot; the Oxford Thirties respected him, but opened their senses to all which seemed to them alive. The difference was lucidly put by Wyndham Lewis in his *Men Without Art* in 1934. Eliot, wrote Mr. Lewis, had instilled a '*fear of speech*—a terror of the *word*' into many young writers. He had cast a spell, but the spell had been broken by the volubility of Auden, for whom words had no terror; though Lewis prophesied it would take some time for this emancipatory effect to start the flow once more. The Oxford Thirties took risks; the Cambridge Thirties tried to reduce risk to a restrictive, costive and academic certainty—a certainty of not being wrong. Mr. Eliot could not be said to be in love with such writers as William Blake or Herman Melville. These new poets could risk a love for Blake *and* Henry James, Melville *and* Dryden; which was the advantage of having no closed system and of preferring the dangers both of volubility and a fundamental generosity. Indeed, volubility and generosity were the conditions of growth. Among their elders these poets could accept, with some reservations, Eliot, Wyndham Lewis and E. M. Forster—Eliot for minting anew, for astringency and being-in-earnest, Lewis for energy and for art as a conscious and formative process, Forster for a gentle yet unrelenting humanism—a parentage by no means unhealthy.

* * *

If the Thirties exist poetically, they exist above all in the poems of W. H. Auden, who, making nonsense of these temporal, tribal divisions, still is alive, still writes, still grows. Much could shortly be learnt of the Thirties by reading those poems which Auden has made about writers who have moved him or helped him—about E. M. Forster who in the poem promises still, though bombs are real and dangerous, that 'the inner life shall pay'; who recalls us from denying reason and ignoring love, trips us like a stone as we run gladly down the slope of hate, and interrupts us like the telephone when we are closeted with madness. Or the poem about Yeats—

> In the deserts of the heart
> Let the healing fountain start,
> In the prison of his days
> Teach the free man how to praise.

The poem to Henry James—

> Master of nuance and scruple,
> Pray for me and for all writers living or dead;
> Because there are many whose works
> Are in better taste than their lives; because there is no end
> To the vanity of our calling: make intercession
> For the treason of all clerks.

The poem to Freud, rejected by 'the ancient cultures of conceit' because he would make impossible the generalised life, break the monolith of state and prevent

the co-operation of avengers—Freud the healer who went his way

Down among the Lost People like Dante, down
To the stinking fosse where the injured
Lead the ugly life of the rejected.
And showed us what evil is; not as we thought
Deeds that must be punished, but our lack of faith,
Our dishonest mood of denial,
The concupiscence of the oppressor.

Or that poem to Herman Melville in which Auden writes of the mildness he sailed into at last and of his cry in exultation and surrender 'The Godhead is broken like bread. We are the pieces.'

On 1 January 1940, Auden, at the end of the Thirties in time, dated his *New Year Letter*—

To-night a scrambling decade ends,
And strangers, enemies and friends
Stand once more puzzled underneath
The signpost on the barren heath
Where the rough mountain track divides
To silent valleys on all sides,
Endeavouring to decipher what
Is written on it but cannot,
Nor guess in what direction lies
The overhanging precipice.
Through the pitch-darkness can be heard
Occasionally a muttered word,
And intense in the mountain frost
The heavy breathing of the lost;
Far bown below them whence they came
Still flickers feebly a red flame,
A tiny glow in the great void
Where an existence was destroyed;
And now and then a nature turns
To look where her whole system burns
And with a last defiant groan
Shudders her future into stone.

As at the end of the Thirties, so in the Forties of hatred and destruction, so now in the Fifties of doubt and hypocrisy. But later in that same poem Auden wrote that

. . . will is free not to negate
Itself in Hell.

Our job is to continue climbing up the mountain through Purgatory—

Our faith well balanced by our doubt,
Admitting every step we make
Will certainly be a mistake,

but still believing we can climb higher and still taking the penitential way 'That forces our wills to be free.'

* * *

There was more to the Thirties than the sheer song and the eloquent teaching and faith of Auden, only they happen to be their most distinctive act and contrivance, a life-warming poetry without defeatism or evasion. A scrambling decade, yes; but a breathing space of possibility in which the young could absorb the earnestness, the acuteness, the revolutionary re-establishment of tradition achieved in a somewhat whippy and patchy way by that generation of writers—Mr. Eliot in chief—whom we label modernist; but it was possible also to join up the patches, to infuse blood and freedom and fullness into what was thin, to devise, at any rate for Mr. Auden to devise, a poetry which is a full expression of our undivided time and which does enhance the ways and means of living well. One particular I should emphasise is that various poets of the Thirties—MacNeice, as well as Auden, and Spender in his first book—established a new subtle and lucid communication in poetry.

So far as I feel myself a Man of the Thirties—affined, that is, to the more vital Thirties—I wear the Three-O stitched on my back with pleasure, as another might have worn the badge of some connection with the times in which Milton or Dryden or Wordsworth were the formative champions. It so happens that the vital Thirties are demarcated at one end by the emergence of a new poetry, at the other, accidentally, by the barrier of war. They are demarcated also at the latter end by Mr. Auden's transference from England to America, turning him, so far as our day-to-day literary affairs go, into a figure out of sight, a figure of legend if not of the past, whose occasional and often most valuable perceptions and exhortations in prose are mostly inaccessible on this side of the Atlantic. If indeed there is an eclipse to be observed here, eclipses always are no more than transitory.

This long story seems to me a tragic masterpiece. It is absolutely Italian in that we judge Ugo Gattegna's character and especially the character of his love affair (if we can call it that) entirely from his behaviour. Ugo is a Tuscan landowner, living by himself in the Big House with his old housekeeper, Cesira. He has apparently ceased to take any interest in anything, including the war, which he has till now ignored. An old friend, Gianni, takes refuge in his house. Ugo never asks him why he had to come but one day suddenly decides to visit his town house in the nearby city

THE HOUSE HAS STARTED MOVING

GUGLIELMO PETRONI

continued

X

'So we're really going?' Gianni asked the next morning when, still in bed, he saw Ugo come into his room, almost ready to leave, his hat on his head.

'You should have been ready by now.'

'But you never said another word last night and I didn't know.' But he started to dress hurriedly. From outside came the sound of the bells on the horse which was already hitched to the trap.

'There's a coat on the chair because it's cold out now.'

Outside the plain was hidden by the mist and from the road a continuous rumble of passing cars could be heard. At the gate they had to wait for an interminable convoy to pass before they could go out on the road. It was cold; for a long time they watched the trucks and warlike contraptions go by with frozen soldiers nestling on them, some of whom lazily stared at the elegant trap whose passage they blocked. Then the convoy ended and they set off towards the main town.

'Where are we going?' asked Gianni.

'To town. It's more than a year since I've been there.'

'But Cesira told me you made a trip before I arrived.'

'Yes, but not to the County seat. I went elsewhere. For some years I had wanted to see again certain things in a gallery, but I hadn't thought that now they were all closed, and I made the trip for nothing.'

'What an idea, at a time like this. You ran into an air-raid, she told me.'

Ugo did not answer; he held the reins in his gloved hands, the same colour as his raincoat, and looked straight ahead. Gianni sat staring at his friend's profile—a face which rarely bore an expression even slightly different from the one he was watching at that moment: always equally immutable, even if on rare occasions a faint shadow of feeling seemed to want to cross it. 'Always the same fixed coolness', thought Gianni, imagining there still to be, under the appearances, a hidden churning of mute and massive ideas, of indefinable sensations and imprisoned images.

Gianni was feeling well; he watched that unapproachable face whose beauty seemed of stone, and, as he began to feel its attraction—the same attraction which had once brought them together and made them friends—a nervous irritation seized him to think he had never been able to get close to, or discover, a moment of abandon in this being. Even now he felt the weight of the months he had passed with him, only it was as if he had been alone; or was it Ugo who had been alone? Ugo who was really enclosed in an inaccessible solitude, an isolation which could have been odious if it hadn't been for a strange quality, hard to define, which flooded the spirit of the rare persons who had managed to approach him.

'Well,' he said aloud.

The horse was trotting at an almost mechanical pace towards the County seat, the old city. More than once during the journey Gianni had asked himself why Ugo had decided on the jaunt. At this thought his heart was suddenly inflamed by a violent resentment: 'But can it be possible, can it be possible,' he thought, 'that with this man not only must one never understand anything, but one must end up by obeying him, by doing what he wishes without even having an explanation!' And at the end of these thoughts he asked in an unintentionally loud and irritated voice:

'Listen, may I at least know why we are going to town?'

Ugo turned towards him slowly, looking at him with a slight interrogation in his eyes, waited a moment, then answered:

'I don't know, I felt the desire to.'

'But what will we do there?'

'We'll call on some relatives of mine, at my house, then we'll go around; it's years since I've put foot in my house, now I feel I'd like to.'

'Have you relatives there?'

'Yes.'

And again they were silent; the road became wider, covered by thick plane trees, and ever more densely lined with houses, old peasant houses and little bourgeois villas.

'Let's at least try to be careful,' said Gianni as the ancient city gates appeared at the end of the road. 'You know, I think it might have been better if I hadn't come with you. Not for me, but I wouldn't want to get you into trouble.'

Ugo answered with a sharp gesture, obliging him to be quiet, then said:

'Don't worry about anything, here I am known to everyone.'

'Yes, but I've never told you about myself, perhaps I should have forced you to listen to me once at least.'

'It wasn't necessary, and anyway you'd never have managed it.' Ugo answered, surprising Gianni with the joking tone with which he said the last words. After a while Ugo went on: 'I don't want to know anything, nothing, understand? I already know too many things', and this time he was almost fierce. He sunk deeper into the collar of his raincoat, though the early morning chill had been dispelled by the sun which was stretching bolder shadows on the asphalt outlining the silhouettes of roofs and tree trunks.

They crossed the few streets of the town and entered a maze of small lanes winding between old houses and grey palaces. Every now and then Gianni felt angry again at having to follow his friend without knowing what they were about, without being able to ask where they were going and what they would do; at last, still resentfully, he asked:

'Why can't you let me know where you're taking me; is it possible that you can never feel the need to say what you want to do, or what you think? It makes one really angry.'

'Eh!' said Ugo, and Gianni could not tell whether it was meant for him or for the horse that was just then stopping in front of an old palazzo, grey and rather depressing.

'We're stopping here,' said Ugo pointing to the dark stone entrance. Gianni turned to see better; on the keystone of the arch, which was the only untouched architectural detail of the old construction, obviously embellished in several successive eras, the name 'Gattegna' was carved.

'Is that you?' asked Gianni.

'No, no, that's my family, sometime back.'

'Naturally, that's what I meant. But who's there now?'

'It's rented to several families; but the main floor is still mine, and some relatives of mine live there.'

The horse was tied to the grille of a first floor window.

They went up the staircase, large and dark, which here and there maintained the structure of an ancient and outdated architectural severity, and which now seemed rather dirty. On the first landing Ugo rang, and an old woman with large slippers came to open, asking suspiciously:

'Who do you want?'

'I'm Ugo Gattegna.'

The old woman opened her eyes which were buried into the wrinkles of her face and stood for a while opening and closing her mouth, then cried out, making an echo down the stairway:

'The young master!' and ran off.

'Let's go in', said Ugo annoyed, starting to take off his coat. After a moment the old woman came back:

'Come in, come in; only the young lady is home.'

'The young lady?'

'Miss Adele. I'll open your rooms, but it's years now since anyone's been in them: what'll we do, what'll we do!' Then she stopped to watch Ugo with her mouth open and again a shrill cry echoed against the vast ceilings of the house:

'Oh, oh, the young master, oh! oh!'

Ugo said: 'My friend and I will sleep here tonight.'

'Oh, oh!' the old woman went on.

Just then a young girl with a striped dress came into the hall, tall and very young; in the darkened room she stood in front of the window but it was impossible to see her face around which her very blonde hair, against the light, made a halo.

'I'm Adele,' she said without moving, her voice that of a grown woman, firm and friendly. Ugo turned slowly and observed her for a long time, in silence, quite unworried.

'I'm Adele!' she repeated insistently.

'I'm sorry. I'm Ugo Gattegna.'

'I know that quite well. I am Adele,' and as Ugo seemed to be waiting for further explanation, she went on without annoyance: 'Adele Briganti, of course, you know.'

'You', said Ugo. 'But weren't you small?'

The girl laughed quickly, and stretched out her hand.

'How could I still be small: I too have the right to grow, haven't I? If one were to come around a little more often.' It was obvious that she was avoiding the use of either the 'you' or the 'thou'.

'This is my friend Gianni, Gianni Ricci.'

The girl's face, large and well defined, despite the light skin common to blondes, had a high forehead, perhaps a little too high, curving at the chin towards a long and rather narrow neck. She was wearing a simple little dress of white linen with brick coloured stripes, and her movements suited her studiedly easy air. On her feet were Turkish slippers with red pompons.

'Well Ugo, what a surprise this is! If you'd warned us, we could have prepared your rooms; the house is terribly untidy.' Then, evidently making an effort, she decidedly went ahead with the 'thou': 'So you really have remembered your house; we'd begun to think you'd quite forgotten our existence; we've often thought it was time we called on you, as you won't even answer our letters.'

'Where's your father?'

'He's gone out with mother, but they'll be here for lunch. Of course you'll stay with us.'

'No. Now we'll take care of the horse, then we'll find somewhere to have lunch.'

'You must stay here; anyway it's quite impossible to find a place to eat nowadays.'

'We'll stay here then, if Gianni doesn't mind.'

'I don't know; you know best,' said Gianni.

'Today we'll stay here.' Ugo smiled broadly, and Gianni watched him with surprise.

When they were outside, Gianni said:

'That's a nice girl; who is she?'

'She's my cousin.'

Then they went for a walk through the town, and during the whole time Ugo's only words were:

'Soldiers, soldiers, nothing but soldiers.'

'It's the same thing everywhere,' Gianni answered.

XI

The Gattegnas' old town house did not have any special history; it was a smallish old palace dating from a few centuries earlier; in fact, it was obviously a much older building than appeared at first sight, as certain architectural elements still had definite Renaissance characteristics. The Gattegnas had remodelled it at various times, and every remodelling dated from one of the fortunate periods in their commerce which had once made their name well known almost everywhere. Now it appeared to be a neglected old building with a few worn indications of gentility; the two top floors had been turned into flats for rent, the ground floor housed a notary's office and a dentist's; the main floor was still the Gattegnas'; up till about ten years earlier they had lived there most of the year, especially in winter, then the Gattegnas had slowly lost the habit of the city, especially when the Big House had been done over and enlarged by Ugo's mother; and the country-house became even more definitely their residence when a tram-line was built which made a speedy link between the country and the County seat.

The large house, made up of great rooms, dark corridors, and beautifully vaulted ceilings, had begun to show signs of being abandoned after the family had almost definitely settled in the country; it was then decided to give part of the house to Ugo's father's sister who had married Rosano Briganti. The agreement on that

occasion, as with all things, had been established by Ugo's mother: the relatives were to live in the house with the understanding that they keep it up for the Gattegnas for whenever they chose to be in town, even if only for a few days.

Ugo's aunt, a pretty fair example of the Gattegna family, tall and of few words, had been happy to live in her father's house, where, especially after Ugo's birth, she had stayed almost entirely with her new family. Ugo's main memories of the house were of the brief stays during his first exams. He also remembered having met his cousin, who, as a young girl, almost a baby, had watched him without smiling. Since his first year at the university he had never set foot in it again, even on the rare occasions when he passed through town. During all these years his uncle, feeling some scruple, had written, giving news of the house, and asking after Ugo's life, inviting him to come in from the country; but these letters had ended up, almost all sealed, in the same old drawer. Although there was no great distance between the city and the Big House, and with the tram one could get there in less than an hour, his aunt's family had never taken the trouble to go out there, partly because they thought it up to the nephew to give some sign of life, and partly out of sheer inertia, as their relations with the Gattegnas had always been good, but utterly lacking in cordiality.

'He's a fine one!' Adele's father would sometimes say when they spoke of Ugo in the family.

'Just like his father and his grandfather; my father and brother were just like him,' Adele's mother would say, and then add, 'but Ugo outdoes them in everything: he's a real live typical example of the Gattegnas. He even has a bit of his mother. In some ways he's like her; she had a lot of style, and was terribly monotonous in her habits.'

This was all Adele knew about her cousin. That morning seeing him so big, so elegant, yet cold and indifferent, with that strange gaze which escaped or confounded one, not that she considered herself a girl who could easily be confounded, it had had the effect on her of meeting some stranger who, for some reason, seems immediately familiar and friendly. Then she had thought 'We're cousins, aren't we?' and concluded to herself 'I could have quite easily addressed him with the "thou" immediately, silly girl!' And then she had shaken her light hair with a gesture of annoyance.

Even her mother and father had been a little perplexed when they heard Ugo had arrived; it was his house all right, and they had often written to him to make up his mind and come back to take care of his interests in the city; but by now they had got used to thinking about it from time to time as an accomplished duty. His sudden unexpected visit had almost put them out; then the three of them, with the maid, set to work to put a little order in the rooms that had been closed for so long.

'We'll get his rooms ready and he can do exactly as he pleases. You were quite right to invite him to lunch, Adele, and the friend too, of course. Fancy his having a friend! I'm curious to see him; what sort of friend is he?'

'Uhm, I didn't see him!'

'You didn't see him!'

And now, after the first impression, the rare novelty broke the grey monotony of the enormous lonely house where there were no resources of any kind, and gave them a certain gaiety which pleased them.

'You might at least have answered some of our letters,' Adele's father said benevolently when they were all seated at the table. He was a tall man with large eyes and a lot of hair, always dressed in black, and with high starched collars, or perhaps they were celluloid, which forced him to keep his neck horribly straight above minutely-speckled grey ties, invariably adorned with a pearl stickpin. Ugo did not notice the words were being addressed to him and continued eating while the others stopped to watch him. His aunt shook her head with a smile, and the others were silent.

'Ugo,' said Signor Rosano, this time in such a way as to oblige him to listen, 'I'm pleased to see you; but you should think of us more often.'

'I live in the country,' Ugo answered this time.

'It's barely an hour away.'

'I hadn't seen you for a long time.'

'But we've written to you many times. Now there's no tram. Ah this war! For us it's almost impossible to move nowadays, but you have a horse; it would do you good too.'

'Yes, the letters . . .' Ugo answered vaguely; and this time it was Gianni who could not refrain from a smile and a significant gesture of the hand.

'You're not from round here?' Ugo's aunt asked Gianni.

'I'm from Bologna.'

'You must have had a terrible journey.'

'Yes, very bad. It was frightful.'

'What times we live in!' Rosano exclaimed.

'Yes, they're bad times all right, but I'm afraid there'll be worse ones coming.'

'Why?' asked Adele.

'Why? Well, because you haven't an idea of what bad times really are.'

'But how could anything be worse than this!' said Rosano.

'Don't you think the war could come right here into this part of the country?'

'You really think so, we're quite uncomfortable as it is.'

'Why shouldn't it; how can we possibly tell? Haven't you seen how all these forecasts and all these statements by the people who are supposed to be running things have turned wrong; well then, how can we be right, when we haven't even any facts to go on?'

'And if the war were to reach us here, what would we do, father?' Adele asked.

'How do I know? Thank heaven we've been spared so far, and the country is peaceful here.'

'Don't rely too much on that "peacefulness". No one here has the slightest idea what it's like in other parts of the country, and what life has become in the cities.'

'I know, I know,' said Signor Rosano, 'I have friends who come from the big cities and I've heard of incredible things, frightful stories. Here it's different, and sometimes I ask myself if I should really believe all the things one hears.'

'I can assure you that the things you hear are nothing to some of the things that actually happen. You people can't realise it; I say it would be better for everyone to be in the middle of some of these horrors. Believe me, people round here haven't suffered enough yet.'

'Luckily,' said Ugo's aunt.

'Signora, sometimes what seems to be good fortune may turn out to be a calamity; it depends on one's point of view. The truth is that it's a tragedy that there are places where one cannot realise all that's going on nowadays.'

At this point Ugo's aunt looked at her husband and daughter with an expression which, to them, might have meant that she had finally discovered how the boy could be a friend of Ugo's.

'You're a sort of idealist, but real life's a different matter,' said Rosano in the tone of a man who knows many things.

'Here people suffer too little if not at all,' Gianni went on, 'because the privations you put up with in these parts are the simplest of the ordinary sacrifices imposed by war. Here everyone suffers too little, that's why they don't understand all they should, I can assure you.'

At these words, Ugo, who had given no sign of life up till then, stirred himself and answered his friend: 'One always suffers to the extent of one's capacity; we all suffer, who can say he does not suffer?'

'Ugo, you live too much in yourself.'

Just then they stood up, and after having a cup of coffee with the others, Ugo and Gianni went to their rooms. They were old rooms with lacquered wooden beds, a few carpets, and pictures on the walls for the most part depicting religious subjects.

From the windows one could see into a garden, entirely closed off by the four-storey building, a green square made up of ancient trees, thick hedges, and shadows. The static green, closed in by the walls of the house, bathed in deep silence, attracted the two young men who leaned their elbows on the window-sills, each one trying to penetrate with his eyes the thick foliage through which the four columns of the ancient portico could be seen.

'Why did we come to town?' Gianni asked once more, trying to find an explanation for Ugo's sudden decision.

'No reason. I suddenly thought how bored you must be. I was trying to understand what you think about; but don't worry, we shan't run any risks here.'

'What risk should I run?'

'Well, I don't suppose I know much about what's going on, but even I can often understand a situation.'

'Thank you, Ugo. I've been noticing that during the time I spent with you in the country I no longer thought of anything, in fact I'd forgotten many people and many things that are important to me.'

'It means that being alone for a while has done you good and rested you. I think you badly needed rest. I'm glad you could take it here, with me.'

Gianni was especially struck by this last sentence; it was the first time since he'd arrived that Ugo had said anything of the sort to him in a familiar and even affectionate tone, and he was pleased and a little moved by it.

'I know.'

Gianni hoped that that particular moment wouldn't fade; he had the impression that for some special reason Ugo had inadvertently raised an edge of the strange cloak that always hid his heart.

'This is a beautiful garden,' Gianni said after a while, only to be able to go on speaking; he wanted to keep the conversation alive as long as possible, and perhaps for that very reason, he didn't quite know what to say. But Ugo was entirely taken up with the brief spectacle offered by that window which opened on to a closed and forgotten world far from the presence of men despite its being in the centre of the house as well as in the heart of a city.

'It is beautiful,' Ugo answered. 'I can remember being here, looking at this buried and forgotten patch of green, when I was a boy, especially when they left me here for a while before exams.'

'You never did go to public school, did you?'

'No, when I was a small boy I had a tutor at home, and my mother followed my studies with great care.'

'I'm not sure it was best.'

'Best? It was horrible!' He said the word 'horrible' almost with emphasis, and once more Gianni had to control himself so as not to show his astonishment.

'How could I have enjoyed it?' Ugo went on after a pause: 'After all, nothing is enjoyable. Boredom is at the bottom of everything, and even if everything had been different, boredom would still be there, I believe.'

'It might have been different, though.'

'Perhaps. You know, in those days I'd sometimes get up from bed to see the peasant children on the road all bundled up on their way to school, with their satchels round their necks. I was always awake; in the silence of the early hours of a winter morning their voices would float up from the main road, then I'd get out of bed and watch them passing down there far away; alone, in twos, in sixes or more, chatting together, sometimes throwing stones as they walked; then I'd go back to bed and wait for Cesira to wake me.'

Gianni assented with his head to show he was listening carefully.

'Later I, too, would throw stones in the garden; but my mother would say: "No stones." Yes, stones, I'd think, then after a while, yes stones, no stones: then I'd think—no stones, no stones, you fool!—and I'd have loved to throw one in the air.'

'Well, the other boys had their troubles and worries too, I assure you.' With these words Gianni wanted to lighten the pain which, after watching that face for many days, he could see vibrating under the bronzed skin, the velvety grey eyes.

'Other interests, other interests. They'd say to me: you must understand. And unfortunately I always understood, damnably well.'

'You should have finished that course of yours at the University, Ugo. I think it would have done you a lot of good.'

'Did you hear the noise my uncle makes when he eats?'

'No, I didn't notice.'

'I did, and if I were to tell you that it pains me, that I feel upset by it, what would you say? I don't put up with much in other people; I'm no good at doing things if they need to be done in close proximity with others; too many things nauseate me, make me sick at the stomach; and if I hadn't had you three when I was studying, I think I would have only lasted a few months instead of years.'

'Luisa and Rafaele were and still are very fond of you.'

'I remember them, now and then.'

'They wanted to help you in those days but you're so difficult to understand.'

'You might as well say impossible; after all, I know that there really isn't, and wasn't, anything to understand.'

Gianni almost felt uncomfortable, it was the first time he'd seen Ugo go off his own fixed track, and although it was one of his greatest desires, although he had always sought for any tiny abandon in Ugo, now he felt perplexed. So he said:

'If you did it for me, I'm grateful; but if you'd preferred, we could have stayed in the country. I assure you I like the life there with you, and am happy.'

'I did it for you, but now it's different; still I'm glad I did it.'

'Will we stay here long?'

'I don't think so, not later than all of tomorrow.'

'Are you pleased to have found a place that reminds you of certain moments of your childhood?'

'Oh, it's not that any more, there are new things, new people.'

'Ah,' said Gianni, but he hadn't understood. Then he went on: 'everything's changed, nowadays everything goes so fast.'

'Things change for everyone. My cousin, for instance. I'd never noticed her before.'

'But if you didn't even look at her! She seems to be a nice clever girl to me.'

Gianni saw his friend's face cloud over, saw his eyes staring back at him as they had done before. Moving away from the window, Ugo said:

'Let's go out, let's go for a walk in town.'

In the night a great inhuman scream filled the sky, embraced the whole city savagely, died out rapidly, started again, was silent, repeated, was finally silent. Immediately after it those who were awake could hear a rustling muffled by the barred windows, in the next house, in the apartment above, in the palace across the way. The whole city, bestirred and oppressed, could be heard waking out of its sleep. Almost every night now it was the same; sometimes the siren would awaken and shock the citizens several times in a night, though nothing had ever happened and there was little to fear. The peaceful little provincial city, even though it lay on the route of the night fliers, going heaven knows where to carry their sad messages, did not represent a likely target for their purposes. Yet perhaps in no other place did the impassioned wail of the siren bring such intense dismay, such compact fear. Every new alarm seemed to make the inhabitants not more but less prepared: the whole city would wake up, leap sleepily to its feet, and run, ragged and without reason, or control, into the lurid cellars of the century-old palaces, crouch in the mouldy smell of centuries of dampness, in the deep silence of despair, or be caught up in the frenzied madness of hysterical fear which raised strange and upsetting moans and outcries. Children would be born prematurely, and old men die of heart attacks shuttling down the dark stairs in the arms of their families; insurmountable shynesses, heirs to a tradition nourished in the sacristy for centuries, fell away under the insufficient protection of silk pyjamas and old nightgowns so worn they were ready to fall into pieces at the slightest strain or false move.

Why is it that in certain small cities in the provinces, especially among those which in terms of the war are most protected by their own insignificance and more respected than others by the discomforts of the times, why is it that terror and despair should reach levels which bear no relation to the silent, almost indifferent resignation of other cities where almost every morning the dead can be counted in hundreds if not in thousands? It is hard to say, and whoever does not know the excitable spirit of our small provincial cities, whoever does not know how stories and bits of news which come from far away, where things have really happened and been faced, grow and are spread in the minds of people.

Ugo had not wakened, or rather had not opened his eyes; he had stayed quite still and perceived quite clearly the dark ant-like movement of frightened humanity deprived by fear of centuries of reserve; but he had not wanted to wake completely. Gianni, however, had wakened all of a sudden, had tried to turn on the light, but the current had been switched off as during all alerts; from where he lay he had heard someone rush out of the house, then had listened to Ugo's regular breathing. Finally, unable to go back to sleep, he had

lit a cigarette. At the noise of the match scraping against the box, Ugo had not immediately realised what was happening; then he too began to look for a cigarette.

'Are you awake? Did you hear the siren?'

Ugo could not remember, though he knew quite well there had been an alarm, and after lighting a cigarette he asked:

'Do you think Adele has gone down to the cellar?'

'I thought I heard the others run down in a hurry,' said Gianni, thinking to himself that Ugo's preoccupation was rather unusual.

'What nonsense,' said Ugo, 'you've no idea how all this annoys me.'

'Why? I didn't think it had bothered you much, you didn't even wake up.'

'No, no, it's not that; but all this fear, this nervousness which comes over people who want to save themselves at all costs, goodness knows from what. Above all, I can't bear the untidiness that it brings.'

'Well Ugo, it's not so difficult to understand, and it seems quite logical; after all it's quite natural to be frightened.'

'Perhaps, but it's in rather bad taste.'

They were silent, smoking. Gianni still wanted to talk, would have liked to ask: 'bad taste?' but said nothing and felt happy being near him, having the sensation of being able, if only slightly, to take part in the other's feelings.

Then Ugo went back to sleep, and Gianni was left sitting up in bed, listening. He could hear the regular breathing of his companion; and then the desert all around them in that immense silence. And he thought about himself: it was time he did so; he had remembered nothing of his recent past. The scream was heard again, then little by little the noise of those who were coming up from underground, going back to bed. As he stretched out to go back to sleep, the light went on and he saw Ugo asleep in his bed; his face in repose had a relaxation he had not yet known, as if it were carved in stone. Again he felt an intense pleasure being near this man who was always strong, always the same, capable of keeping everything to himself, of loading on his own shoulders the weight of his own life; then Gianni turned off the light and went to sleep filled with a physical well-being which almost made him shiver.

XII

'*Tient'a su! tient'a su!*' This reminder of Pascoli would pursue Ugo every time he heard an axe fall in the woods. Since dawn that morning he had been listening to the sound of the axe echoing through the woods with a persistence which would have been exasperating if Ugo had not liked it and listened to it with satisfaction. *Tient'a su*: these three words kept coming back to his mind with frightening monotony, and he listened to them multiply themselves into infinity. In the afternoon, when work in the woods was resumed, he began to realise that never in all the past years had he heard such intense work in the woods, and said to himself 'It sounds as if they want to destroy it.' Then he started to think of other things, for during those days there was something that came back insistently; ever since he and Gianni had come back from the city, he had isolated himself more and more, taken with the desire to organise and make sense of something which kept coming back to his mind as if some doubt were assailing him; but then he would end up by forgetting it and think of something else. Now the continuous felling that came from the woods attracted him more and more, it seemed too vast, it gave him the impression the whole wood was being attacked by an army of rodents, and the sound which reached the house thickly and harmoniously no longer pleased him; it began to produce a certain discomfort. At last he went to the kitchen, crossed it almost rapidly, and stood in the doorway from which he could look down on the profile of the woods; from there the brisk sound of the axes seemed to multiply and repeat itself in an infinite echo; it looked as if Ugo were listening, but in fact he was thinking of something else; the kitchen door was an almost novel point of view for him, he could have counted in his mind the number of times he had chanced to look out at his land from up there, and although the view differed only slightly from the one from his bedroom window, the few yards' difference was enough to make it

all seem new, all invaded by the clear sensations of memories of his pale, far-away childhood.

As he stood on the doorstep, his thoughts were suddenly interrupted by the characteristic sound of a tree falling; part of the profile of the woods beneath his eyes began to waver, the highest and most majestic boughs of an oak which rose a few yards above the other leaves began to sway, moved the branches all around for quite a distance in a disquieting wave, then suddenly fell forward, modifying the contours of the hill which for a while were bathed in a sort of golden dust. Ugo breathed deeply and stood for a long time with his eyes wide, staring down there, still incredulous of what he had seen.

'It isn't possible, it isn't possible,' he started to mutter to himself. Cesira turned at the sound of his voice.

'Cesira!'

'I'm here,' she answered.

'Good,' said Ugo, his voice once more monotonous and calm. 'Send for Baccelli immediately.'

'Call Baccelli!' Cesira stood for a moment watching the young man, then, after having deduced by herself, with that spontaneous instinct which guided her in matters with the master, that he must be quite upset, she hurried to tell a peasant to get Baccelli.

Baccelli was almost perturbed by the call; for more than ten years he had hoped for something of the sort, had wanted Ugo to show some sort of interest in him, in the land, in his work which he not unjustly considered misunderstood or little known by his taciturn landowner. The irritation which always seized him in the face of Ugo's disinterestedness had become a habit; there was by now a motif of pride and satisfaction in it, for, without meaning to, Baccelli had come to feel that he alone was the driving force of such a vast and complex pattern of interests.

However, out of habit, he had always waited for, and insisted on, some sort of a sign of interest from his landlord; and now that for the first time he was receiving such a sign when he least expected it, he was

surprised at himself, for, as he walked up to the Big House where his long-awaited desire was about to be fulfilled, instead of feeling satisfied, he was irritated and forced to admit that after all the call was annoying him.

Ugo was sitting in his armchair looking at the newspaper Gianni held in his hands, running over the headlines which appeared on it. *Overwhelming Defeat of Enemy Fleet* was written in enormous unwieldy letters, but his mind was full of the hammering that came from the woods; every now and then, one could hear another crash and another of the century old trees, which he knew one by one, would come down, cut off at the base; but he remained impassive, though he had to admit an acute pain even more pronounced than the one engendered by the tiresome adjectives of the headlines on the paper before his eyes.

When Baccelli came in, he barely moved his head; but said nothing.

Gianni took his eyes off the paper, looked at them both, then went back to reading.

'Did you call for me, Master Ugo?'

'Yes, I saw one of the large trees in the woods being felled; what's going on?'

Baccelli rolled his eyes, not understanding a word of what Ugo meant by this; 'Now why is he thinking of trees?' he wondered. Then answered:

'I'm having quite a number cut, there's a huge demand and I've made a very good contract, you've no idea how advantageous; we're taking in more with this than we do with a usual whole year's income; there's a firm carrying out some building that pays us well, very well.'

'But what has got into your head, Baccelli?'

'What do you mean! What's come into my head. I'm serving the interests of the estate, aren't I?'

'Yes, yes, but . . . ' said Ugo. Baccelli however interrupted him:

'Just think, with this one deal we put the whole property back on its feet, we can go on with all the work we had to suspend at the beginning of the war; costs have risen so much, and with this deal our finances are reorganised to a very surprising advantage.' Now Baccelli was happy. It was the first time he had been able to explain to the young master how he was handling the administration of his lands, and once started, there were very many things he wanted to say.

'Never mind Baccelli,' said Ugo cutting his speech off sharply with an abrupt gesture which the agent knew all too well: 'I only wanted to be sure my impression was quite correct; it isn't a matter of the usual annual cutting, this time they're cutting down the whole wood, they're thinning out the old trees and that I don't want; besides, I've no desire to make good deals.'

The little man's breath was taken; for a while he could not speak, and the veins on his head were seen to grow; at last, very slowly, he managed to take hold of himself and began to speak in a forcedly calm and courteous tone:

'Listen, Master Ugo. This time you must let me speak all the way through or I'll end up by losing my mind and not understand a thing.' Ugo smiled as he watched him, and pointed to a chair, saying:

'Sit down, Baccelli.'

'Yes, yes, thank you, that's better, thank you.' He was silent a moment, readjusted himself completely and started again, confident of his argument, with the tone of one who wishes to finish a question:

'I really don't know what you think, and, without any offence, I must say that you haven't got—and quite rightly how could you?—any experience with matters pertaining to the land and to business. Nowadays wood has risen in price to the limits; its an immense advantage to own a wood such as ours; so far we have only just managed to avoid the inconveniences of the war, and if I were to tell you of all the foresight I've had to employ with all this requisitioning, this enforced harvesting, and other devilries which have developed these days, it would take a whole day.'

'I can imagine, I can imagine.'

'So with all these things it wasn't as if our administration were in one of its better moments; but luckily our land is blessed by God, it must be said; I know of some properties that are completely going to pieces. That we should have had a chance like this is a matter to interest you too, isn't it? You even more than me, don't you think?' Seeing that he was getting no

answer, he proceeded: 'We have to thank Providence that I was one of the first to make a contract with this firm for a large quantity of wood from large trees; its a real fortune, and if I hadn't done it, I'd feel guilty towards you. I wouldn't have been doing my duty, don't you think?'

'There's no doubt about that, Baccelli; I have great admiration for your work, for your competence and scrupulousness. I appreciate your work much more than may appear: I've been wanting to tell you so for some time, but I've never found the way to speak of it. But this time the trees are not to be touched, I don't want to see the wood reduced, emptied; never mind, Baccelli, don't let it worry you; the blame isn't yours. So have them stop the cutting as soon as you can; and what is done is done.'

This time Baccelli really didn't know what or how to think; he couldn't understand what could have happened, nor was he even convinced that Ugo's was a real and proper order. He thought for a while but his brain was confused, there was something about the whole thing that made him quite incapable of reasoning; but this time, too, he managed to calm himself and realise the situation; he knew his man and knew there was little he could do.

Then, after making a great effort at concentration, he believed he had found a decisive argument with which to oppose the absurdity of the landlord:

'But I have a contract with the firm that is carrying out fortifications on the Apuan Alps, down there, luckily quite far away; you see, our trees are being used for the war! In fact, you must believe me. I asked a lot of well-informed people in town, it's a good deal and we're lucky; but you don't realise that things might change from one moment to the next, and then they'd not only come and get this wood but they wouldn't even say good day, and we couldn't breathe a word. Now at least I have a good contract in my hands.'

Gianni had stopped reading and was following the discussion. Ugo, who so far had been listening absent-mindedly, hoping Baccelli would finish quickly, lifted his head, was silent for a moment, then said very slowly:

'I hadn't thought of that, but I might have guessed it. In that case Baccelli, the whole affair annoys me even more, and I'll thank you to see that not another tree is felled beyond the ones that have unfortunately already been killed.'

'But it means millions, understand! millions! *millions!*' the little man desperately spelled out. But even that word, which he perhaps thought magical, had very little effect on Ugo who smiled and said to him benevolently:

'Go on, Baccelli, run along and don't worry.'

'But don't you realise! let me explain: do you know who we have to deal with? Those people could even force us, make us give them everything they need, then never even pay us: but now I have a contract!'

'For the moment they can unfortunately find another hundred people who will take your place; so there's not too much to worry about,' said Gianni. 'Then we're rather out of the way.' And lastly, after having thought for a moment, he added, turning to Ugo: 'Don't let them have the trees, don't let them have them.'

Baccelli had turned pale, and Ugo, who had noticed it, said to him nicely:

'Go on, Baccelli, and thank you, thank you for everything, you're a true friend. Goodbye.'

Baccelli went out hurriedly, his head low, oppressed by a boundless sadness and disturbed to the roots of his soul.

'I think you did well,' said Gianni as soon as they were alone; but was immediately quiet, intimidated by the cold caress of that velvety grey glance.

XIII

In her own way Cesira never took long to size up situations; and as far as the Gattegnas were concerned, she had a sure instinct. It was not difficult for her to have a precise sensation about what was going on inside her young master on occasions such as these, and this time, too, she had only needed what she'd heard, along with the disconnected phrases which Baccelli had uttered on his way through the kitchen, pale and upset, full of resentment yet inevitably bent to the will of Ugo. Even though Cesira had not quite been able to explain to herself all the sensations which had induced Ugo to refuse the

cutting of the trees in the wood, she could run through the various feelings inside of her which had led the young man to refuse abruptly; now she, too, had stopped on the threshold of the kitchen to look out at the wood, that wall of shadow down there beyond the rows of vines, those beautiful old trees, that greenery in which the autumn wind whispered and moaned . . . 'And to make fortifications! Bah,' she had finally said to herself, feeling that with that there was no longer any mystery in all that had happened during the afternoon.

But Cesira could also take account of many things which Ugo never would have known; in fact it was not long before she came to hear of the resentment raised among the day-labourers who had been called to fell the trees, who had seen the earnings they had counted on disappear, and all because of a whim of the young master, as they saw it. Then there were those who said that master Ugo must not be quite right in the head; others who said that the gentry thinks in ways that one can never understand: and of this last remark she even felt quite proud. Others, however, had said that in order to give up that kind of a deal Ugo must have been led by goodness knows what secret plans for even greater profits, claiming there could be no other explanation. But there were also a few who let it be known they know much more, who rather quietly went about saying that Ugo had forbidden the felling because it was intended for fortifications: 'he's against them, mark my words,' they'd repeat; only these remarks aroused a certain apprehension in the woman, who, sitting in her armchair, in the midst of her usual memories, thought back to these comments. Naturally, as always, she had been careful to keep out of the conversations, and once they were over, would invariably think of Ugo, and that old feeling of security she enjoyed whenever she thought of a Gattegna would come back, and so she would feel reassured on this last episode too.

Ugo had always loved the woods. As a child, during the hours that were permitted, he would be placed on the lawn where Cesira could watch him without leaving the kitchen and hear him say:

'The wood is pretty, isn't it, Cesira?'

'Of course it's pretty,' she would answer.

But the child was bored with always being left alone on the lawn and would sometimes gesture to the peasant children who would come to look at him from behind the vine leaves, keeping a proper distance; at his gestures, however, they'd run away as if caught in some mischief.

'Why can't they stay with me?' the child would ask her.

'Because it's not done.'

'Is it really not done?'

'Of course not. Why don't you play with your ball?'

'But I'm bored with the ball.'

'Then play with your gun.'

'It's boring, too.'

'But you have so many nice things.'

'They're all no good.'

'Be a good boy; I'll get your lunch soon.' And the child would sit for hours playing on the grass looking towards the woods. Then his mother would come, and he'd say:

'I'd like to go in the wood.'

'Not in the woods, there are vipers and it's damp,' his mother would answer.

'But the wood is pretty,' the boy would answer.

XIV

When evening falls on the countryside, the peasant families leave the fields, come down from the hills, and their shadows lengthen across the furrows and the cart tracks; a greyness stretches across the plain which has the reflections of mother-of-pearl, the uneven patches in the landscape disappear, and all one sees is an expanse of violet, an opaque shadow which blends sharply with a sky suddenly turned azure and strangely deep, the last ray of sun eclipsing rapidly after having stretched up as far as the mountains and overflowed on to the houses of men. While the women and children go home, many of the peasants go down as far as the main road; as soon as they set foot on the asphalt, coming from the various paths, they set off towards the village shop, walking along the tram tracks where grass has now started to grow, no tram having been seen since the war. The shop is set a little back from the road among the fields to make

room for the double track where the trams which used to come from opposite direction could safely cross each other. The shop has two barred windows under which are two long benches made of stone; between them is the door, covered by coloured reed matting. As soon as the change from day to night begins, the light is turned on in the shop; many peasants of differing ages collect there, some seated on benches, some squatting on the ground with their backs to the walls or the stable doors, some standing around. The younger ones play restlessly, putting their hands round each other's necks as if they were still not exhausted from a day's work in the fields, trying to throw each other on the ground with muffled curses and laughter: 'Will you stop that!' the elder ones say from time to time without expecting to be obeyed. All these men with their beards longer or shorter depending on how near they are to Saturday, their pants loosely supported by leather belts taken from worn-out harnesses, almost always speak to each other in grave tones, even when they are talking the most scandalous gossip, occasionally commenting on the headlines of a sort of bulletin tacked to the front door near the foodstuffs, tobacco, and rare copies of the local daily. But it is no longer the time for bicycle races, and almost all the football games have been suppressed; so few of them buy one; it's enough to read the headlines for the war news; a few words of the large print mouthed out by someone is enough to start long comments on the war, to which many add a few observations derived from letters sent from relatives scattered here and there in the strangest corners of the earth fighting a war too big to imagine. It is then that from time to time someone chances to turn up who has influence in the neighbourhood, and it is he who speaks: with agile movements of the hands, with sudden jerks and broad gestures of their arms, they attempt to explain the strategy of the battles in the North and of the battles in the South to the most attentive listeners: 'You see, the war isn't something one can explain so easily; do you really think it matters so much to lose or gain a little ground? War

today is something quite different, sometimes we don't even vaguely know how it's decided, there are new weapons, of which for the moment we know nothing, which will completely change matters. So it's not up to us to judge; there are those who are thinking about such things, and how we will win; then when we've won, there won't be any more talk of war for centuries and centuries because we will dictate the law to the whole world!'

'Right!' cry the peasants, 'so long as there are no more wars.'

And the strategist, putting his black hat on, goes back to his circuit where he has much to do and to say. Before carrying on with their conversation, the peasants wait for him to be well out of the way, beyond the bend in the road, meanwhile each one thinking of the words he has heard, repeating them mentally with much distrust; besides, they are distrustful by nature, and every time that kind of person leaves after speaking, they discover that when people who count come to speak to them, they listen and believe them, but that no sooner have they turned their backs than a flood of doubts assails them, and each one, for his own benefit, begins to make gestures of incredulity and contempt.

'But goodness knows what's really going on.'

'Anyhow Gattegna didn't want to sell the wood.'

'I'd been called to cut wood, and I've lost several days' work.'

'Well.'

And in all those 'wells' repeated and left that way in the air like so many doubts suspended above their heads, the good nature and simplicity of these people, who know of nothing but their own work, is revealed without encumbrance or subtleties to those who can understand and recognise it:

'I wonder why he wouldn't sell the timber?' one of the younger ones asks, trying for the hundredth time to hitch his trousers under his belt, from which they will soon slip down, once more showing the hem of his underclothes.

'How can one know what got into his head? Meantime we lost several days work.'

'I think,' said a man with a handlebar moustache, 'he's hoping to make more profit; everything is going up.'

'It's hardly the moment to wait! The agent was saying today that the deal's all right now, but that soon no one knows how things will go. It's no time to dicker.'

Standing amongst the others was a young man who had said nothing so far, but had quietly been smoking and listening carefully to everyone, with a sceptical look on his face; he was a really imposing young man with a flat face, on to which his nose, eyes and mouth had been forcefully flattened; beside him stood a thin young man in a jacket, with a little pointed moustache and a great tuft of black hair like a mane. For a while they continued to listen to the chatter of the others, then the big one, with a voice that was worthy of his stature, said:

'You haven't understood a thing.'

'I suppose you understand it all,' someone answered.

'Some things you'll never understand, that I can assure you.'

'He certainly can,' said the small man.

'That's right, Pietrone understands everything, of course we all know that,' someone said with contempt.

Pietrone made a gesture with which he intended to send them all to the devil, when suddenly, as always happened, at the very same moment almost everyone got up to go home, including the proprietor: 'Goodnight, all', and he began to put the shutters on the door.

'What did you make of all that?' Faldella asked his friend Pietrone.

'I've understood that Gattegna is against them, and he doesn't want to give his timber because it would be used for fortifications, that's clear enough!'

'Do you really think he's against them, too?'

'Any normal man likes a chance to make money, and he's turned one down. That class of people never understands anything much, even less than the peasants, but when they do understand, they know what to do much better than anyone else, and they're even capable of losing money on purpose.'

'Then you think Gattegna understands?'

'Yes, I think so.'

'Then you ought to tell your friend.'

'We'll see about that: but first I'd like to talk to him.'

'To Gattegna?'

'Of course.'

'And how will you do it?'

'I'll think about that, good night.'

'Good night.'

They reached a cross-road and parted.

Pietrone was well known throughout the neighbouring countryside; he was one of those peasants occasionally found in those parts who have devoted little of their energy to the fields and who prefer to save it for the almost daily bicycle ride into town, or from one village to the next; they know every *osteria* in the neighbourhood and in the County seat, and have developed a sort of compromise mentality between that of a tramp and a peasant; they are ready to organise a poaching expedition with exceptional skill, or a deal of any sort, a fight or a supper in a country *osteria*. Pietrone had even been in jail as a result of a fight; but this he would laugh about. In public places he was always ready to fight at the least opportunity, and in some places when he would come in with his inseparable Faldella and a friend gathered here or there, many would look down or pay their bills and leave hurriedly. The peasants don't like his type, but generally fear them a good deal, and even when they speak badly of them, make a point of being their friends, even searching them out to flatter them. Pietrone was fairly well known in town, at least in the market neighbourhood; everywhere he had friends of all sorts, and people often used him to solve some knotty problem or to find someone ready to handle a queer assortment of deals. In fact, he was one of those types in whom a strange, disorderly rebellion without reason has taken hold; extremely tenacious and resentful of everything because of a violent and confused love of independence.

Faldella was a sort of protégé of his, of quite a different type; he spent nearly all his time following Pietrone, ready to help him in any undertaking. He was the son of well-to-do farmers, had inherited his father's lands, but instead of going to work as everyone else in the family had always done, he paid others to work it, preferring to use it as a guarantee against all sorts of debts and stupid intrigues, by virtue of which each year his property diminished and was on the way to complete extinction.

For some time Pietrone had been friendly with a group of new acquaintances he had met in an *osteria* in town: after long talks with them Pietrone would explain to his friend:

'They are against these rotten people in high places.' Or would say: 'One day these people will be worth more than the police, don't you worry.' Then they would both feel happy, and they would get the vague impression by following these new friends that they were doing something which could be done with a clear conscience; this last phrase being also Pietrone's.

XV

After the interruption of the felling of the trees in the woods, Ugo had developed the habit of going there in the afternoons. Quite often, after having forgotten something to which he had been much attached, some tiny indication would bring him back to it and he would feel doubly attracted to it by the long period of forgetfulness, making it the principal object of his interest for an indefinite period. Now not a day passed that he did not go to the woods; sometimes he would touch the arm of Gianni, who would immediately understand and follow him quietly, he too almost as silent now as any authentic Gattegna.

It was in fact a century-old wood full of glens and impassable thickets, almost entirely made up of huge trees which often framed the countryside with all the romantic force of a large oak, with all the sentiment which the Italian umbrella pine can give to a stretch of land; as a child he had counted the largest and most spectacular trees one by one, and several of them were known to the family almost as real people, there were even some which in recent generations had acquired special names which were spoken of by the Gattegnas with pride. Gianni and Ugo no longer needed to exchange many words; at times a few monosyllables were enough to convey a whole speech; only when they would run across the stump of a freshly-cut tree Ugo would occasionally say:

'That one I knew.'

Then they would go on walking for hours.

A rainy day interrupted their walks, and Ugo announced that the next day they would once more go into town.

With the hood of the trap raised to avoid the damp, the two young men set off at dawn. By now Gianni would follow his friend, sometimes profoundly annoyed, sometimes happy with that life, with the monotony of the countryside which he was beginning to love. The only time in which he could feel his old passions awaken and let himself fall into bitter thoughts was when the morning paper arrived with the post; he would read it from cover to cover, sometimes re-reading it, and would then bury himself in calculations through which he tried to discover, by using the news in his own way, how the war was going and how things might really be.

That morning the road was deserted. The horse trotted through the mist and dampness of a drizzle which seemed to be suspended in the air, whilst they sat tucked up under the hood with a red and black striped travelling-rug over their knees. The silence around them was pleasant and neither of them felt the need to speak.

A mile from town, where the asphalt, dark and shiny from the rain, ran in a straight line all the way to the first outlying houses, they were both shaken by a shout:

'Stop! Halt!'

Ugo drew the horse up and waited, without leaning forward to see who had challenged them. A moment later two militiamen's faces appeared on either side of the trap, well shaved and protected by hooded capes of grey-green material, their guns casually pointed towards the inside of the trap:

'Where are you going?'

'Into town,' Ugo answered.

'Have you your papers?'

'I am Ugo Gattegna,' and so saying he pulled out his wallet. One of the militiamen stuck his head in the trap to see better, then said to the other one:

'Gattegna, yes, yes, that's all right, I know who he is.'

'And the other one?'

'My name is Stefano Nicolai,' Gianni answered precipitously, pulling out a wallet and showing an identity card.

'He's a friend of mine and he lives with me,' added Ugo. The two militiamen casually examined the card and motioned them on.

'I'm sorry,' said Gianni.

'Oh!' said Ugo.

'I hadn't told you . . . ' Gianni went on; but Ugo interrupted him:

'It doesn't matter. What terrible people one has to put up with!'

'I'm sorry,' said Gianni again.

'Don't worry, I'm well known round here and my name is a good passport.'

They entered the city. At the gates and in the streets there were many soldiers, but no one else bothered the small carriage which proceeded at a slow gait towards the Gattegna town house. Before reaching it Gianni again felt the need to ask:

'But do you realise why I . . . '

'Oh,' Ugo said once more.

'I ought at least to explain.'

'Never mind.'

As soon as the old woman had run off to announce them, Ugo's aunt appeared in the hall. A quick glance at her solid profile, at her mouth which was pressed like graphite into her face, was enough to put her down as a good example of a Gattegna; but in her movements, her way of doing things, she clearly showed the influence of a different sort of life.

'Well, if it isn't my own nephew,' she said, trying to be particularly cordial.

'We felt like a change.'

'Excellent, excellent.'

Then Rosano arrived.

'You never tell us when to expect you but at least we do see you from time to time. Good, good, good; go straight to your rooms and we'll see you at lunch.'

Waiting for lunch, the two friends went to their usual window.

'We didn't see Adele,' said Ugo.

'She must be away.'

A little while later Adele came to see them to tell them lunch was ready, and turning to Ugo, added:

'What a lot of stuff you brought, it's worth a fortune; nowadays one can't find anything in the shops. It's not a matter of money; some days one doesn't know what to do to prepare a meal.' Ugo had, in fact, noticed a large hamper which Cesira had had put in the back of the trap.

'I can't understand why you had to choose today to come into town, it isn't very prudent; everyone's shut indoors since yesterday,' said Rosano as soon as they'd sat down to lunch.

'What's happened?' asked Ugo.

'Well, there was a lot of shooting last night and yesterday soldiers were stopping everyone in the streets, arresting several people; it's chaos here, you know.'

'That's why they stopped us on the road,' said Gianni.

'Yes, yes,' said Ugo. Then after a little added: 'I heard it mentioned yesterday, so I decided to come.'

'What!' said Adele, 'that's more like a reason for staying quietly up there.'

'It's not the moment to expose oneself, on days like this,' said Rosano.

'Well.'

They started to eat in silence and Gianni began to notice that Adele's father made more noise than the others with his mouth, that he often needed to run his tongue along the back of his teeth, and Gianni was surprised to feel a certain uneasiness almost verging on disgust; how many other similar people had he sat next to without ever having noticed such a thing, and yet now, if he hadn't made an effort, the distaste would have become insufferable. A tacit feeling of rebellion overcame him, almost a fury against himself, against the man who was happily eating, and even more against Ugo, whom he could see on the other side of the table, most certainly in the prey of that same sort of obsession. Then Gianni calmed down: 'What nonsense!' he thought.

That night Ugo wouldn't make up his mind to turn off the light, smoking one cigarette after the other, observing Gianni almost as if he were expecting something from him. Gianni, on the other hand, was thinking of the day they'd been through, remembering the nonchalance and lack of surprise with which Ugo had faced the militia, and his lack of amazement at the false name he had given when he handed over the identity card with which he had so often been able to save himself in the difficult life of the last two years. Ugo had acted as if he had known it all beforehand: was it perhaps a rapid and instinctive gift for facing up to situations? Or had he realised everything in a way that had escaped Gianni? Perhaps there were more things in that head than appeared; but it was difficult to understand. He had not spoken to anyone of his recent past, and as for talking to Ugo about it, that had been quite impossible; and even if he had tried to do so more boldly, he was sure he would have provoked nothing but annoyance and impatience. Meeting his friend's glance as he smoked, he twice smiled, and the silence became almost painful, heavier, until Gianni, if only to break it, felt the need to say:

'I don't want to get you into trouble.'

'There's no danger, Gianni: you're the one who's likely to have trouble. But don't worry. I was thinking of something else. I'm not bothering you, am I?'

'No, I'd like you to talk.'

'Don't you think I ought to suggest to these people to come up to the Big House if things get more complicated in town?'

'It would certainly be a kindness.'

'They're the only relations I have. Why don't you tell them?'

'Really, I don't think it's my place.'

'No, you tell them, tomorrow, whenever you get the chance. Good night.'

'Good night.'

That night the sirens again raised their voice above the city, and all around the terror increased. But the two friends stayed in bed and slept uninterruptedly.

The next day, after lunch, Gianni was left alone with Adele's parents to find a way to tell them what Ugo had asked him.

'May I come to your rooms?' Adele asked Ugo, who was moving off alone.

'Why not?'

They sat down in two armchairs and Ugo lit a cigarette, but Adele did not smoke; instead she watched her cousin not without a certain childish curiosity. She had wanted to follow him, thinking she could get him to talk a little; his silence and indifference, though she knew them from before, had struck her. She had never thought of her cousin, but now that she had met him, she was trying to understand him in her own way; the trouble was that she was not very good at judging other people.

'It's not easy, you know, to talk to you,' she said.

'I know Adele, I know. And I'm sorry.'

'One doesn't know what to think about you. Am I boring you?'

'No, but I think you'll be bored if you stay here.'

'I hope not.'

'Gianni's a person who knows how to talk, and needs to; I think he leads a pretty dull life at home with me.'

'And if I really wanted to talk to you?'

Ugo raised his eyes towards hers and his grey glance made her a little uneasy.

'You look like an easy-going sort of man, and clever, too. I've never met such a difficult person to get on with. Aren't you afraid people won't like you?'

'No.'

'You're not very polite.'

'You're right, forgive me, I'm not a good companion.'

'You may be wrong there.'

'Perhaps, yes, perhaps.'

'To tell the truth I sometimes have the impression you're putting it on, trying to make people think you're bored with life.'

'It's not always like that, Adele.'

'But there are limits, you know, and I think you go too far.'

'I don't see myself as you do.'

'Perhaps you're a little hypocritical, very hypocritical, perhaps.'

Ugo was feeling persecuted. With his habitual gestures, with his normal behaviour, he had always managed to cut off any tiresome conversation; but this time he soon had to recognise that his usual methods would be of no use. Meanwhile Adele went on:

'You must be used to doing what you like without thinking of other people?'

'I am, yes.'

'Just as it whips through your head?'

'Whips?'

'Whips. As it goes through your head.'

'What goes through my head?'

'Really, you'd try the patience of a monk, but I don't care, I'm going to stay here and talk, and if you don't want me, you'll have to chase me away.'

'I won't chase you away; I like seeing you.'

'You even know how to pay compliments!'

'I won't chase you away, but try not to torment me.'

'You're as hard as a rock! And as stubborn,' said the girl, almost as if she were speaking about herself. 'And heavy; so if one were to push you on to a steep road, you'd roll even faster than others.'

'I don't know what you're saying. A literary metaphor, no doubt.'

Ugo was silent, continuing to stare at her calmly.

'You must think me pretty stupid.'

'I didn't consider the matter at all.'

'I didn't consider, I don't believe, I don't know!' the girl repeated irritatedly, trying to imitate his cadence.

Ugo was looking towards the window as if he had not heard her; instead he had heard her but was thinking of something else. The girl was getting even more annoyed, not even thinking she might be a nuisance; and in that moment she realised that Ugo had perhaps completely forgotten her. She then had the leisure to observe him for a while, as he did not show any signs of noticing her, and her face, which had so far borne an expression of affected impertinence, became suddenly serious. As she arched her eyebrows, two deep commas appeared at the corners of her mouth.

'But you may not be very well,' she said seriously, without noticing how childish her voice had become: 'Perhaps, Ugo, you should do something; change your way of life. But it's not so easy nowadays . . . '

'What about nowadays?' Ugo asked.

Adele got up, her feelings hurt, realising he had not heard anything of what she had said except for the last four words.

'How can you sit here and not pay attention to anyone else? You're not the only person in the world, are you? You could at least show that tiny bit of politeness we're all obliged to use towards each other.'

'Be patient, don't get angry. You see, I was watching the top of that cypress tree which, seen from here, rises quite a bit above the roof, whereas when I was taking my exams it was still a good bit lower.'

'But there aren't only things, there are people, surely? I'd always heard it said, even when I didn't know you, that nobody interests you. Luckily mother has very

little of the Gattegnas and I'm more like father than mother; I haven't inherited anything from the Gattegnas, and, I can tell you, I'm very pleased I didn't.'

'It is a good thing, you're quite right,' said Ugo who wanted to appease the girl's anger.

'So it's true; you *are* unhappy.'

'Why not, life isn't easy, do you find it easy living in this world?'

'If you mean nowadays, no.'

Ugo was now looking straight at her and there was almost resentment in his manner; he stared at her fixedly, enveloping her with the velvety greyness of his eyes: the girl, after sustaining his look with a frown that was also a little comic, lowered her eyes, turned her head, and missed the smile of satisfaction with which Ugo was watching her.

'You said nowadays, you meant something by that.'

'At our age it doesn't take much to understand that we're living in a doomed period.'

'Why?'

'Because we're denied the things which could make us happy, make us enjoy our youth, make us feel that it isn't just passing away for nothing, that it isn't all useless.'

'At our age. But you're still a girl, you've got time!'

'Yes, and I suppose you're old. You see, you don't even have the right idea of yourself.'

'Perhaps.'

At this point Ugo decided to interrupt the conversation, no matter how, as it was seriously beginning to annoy him, and also, for some reason, to worry him; but it was a different annoyance from usual, largely because he felt violently irritated with himself. Then the others appeared.

'Here they are,' said Rosano. He was dusting a bottle of wine which he held in his hand.

'If we won't know what to eat, there's quite a bit left to drink. The cellar's still full. Come on Ugo, let's have a glass, it's wine from your own property.'

'Thank you.'

'You must drink heavily; I hadn't thought of that before,' said the girl suddenly. Gianni started to laugh, explaining that Ugo never drank more than the most normal of human beings. The mother, however, looked at her daughter a little worried and asked:

'What sort of talk is that? It's hardly suitable.'

'I've been talking to Ugo and I wanted to see how he's made,' Adele said candidly.

Ugo who had remained seated without speaking, felt something fill him with dismay. He would have liked to get up and run away, but realised it would be a little ridiculous, and stayed where he was. Finally he felt himself blushing: at first he was surprised; it hadn't happened to him since he was a child; then he became furious with himself, trying to appear indifferent, but although it was his most usual attitude, he felt embarrassed and lost; he had a suspicion the others could follow all these sensations on his face, and remained with his eyes turned towards a vague part of the wall ahead of him. Actually no one was watching him, but even if they had looked into his face, nothing or very little was transpiring of what to him seemed extremely obvious. Adele had started to chatter, her voice banal and petulant, and to Ugo it seemed suddenly insufferable and insignificant.

Rosano sat down next to him and said:

'I want to thank you; we've been looking around lately, because so many of our friends, so many families in town, have had to arrange for a place in the country. Some have even transported their most important belongings out of the city. We were thinking of it, but we didn't dare turn to you; we've seen so little of you during the last few years that we've almost lost contact, yet we're really the only relations you have. It was high time, and we're grateful to you, aren't we, Georgia? We didn't know which way to turn if we'd had to leave the city, but now we feel better; however, I don't think it will be necessary. I think all these worries are exaggerated and all these precautions excessive; but if everyone's doing it, we'd best think about it too.'

'Now you know where you can take refuge if necessary,' said Ugo in a sharp tone, devoid of cordiality; so much so that Rosano was struck by it and said no more.

(*To be concluded*)

THE HOMECOMING

J. VAN MELLE

Translated from the Afrikaans by Uys Krige

She sits with her smallest child in her lap and listens to the wind. It has been blowing for days on end. The wind rises every morning and blows till the sun sets; then it dies down till the next day. It blows over the endless veld, over the parched, frost-bitten grass, and over the great, black, burnt patches. To this side the veld has been burnt out entirely; and from where she sits, the woman sees through the window nothing but the black plains. The pallid blue sky stands above, rigid, without a single cloud. And in it shines the sun, powerless to warm where the cold wind blows. A little way from the house is a small low ridge of white stone, remote from the wind, as solitary as an island.

It is lonely in the house. And with its dull roar the wind outside makes it lonelier still.

In a corner of the room a little girl lies asleep on the ground with her head on a cushion. The woman also has three small sons, but they are all at school now. They leave the house early in the morning and do not return until late in the afternoon. She must get up now to cook the meal, but she remains seated; the wind makes one tired and sad; listless, as if there is nothing, only the voiceless house and the burnt veld and the wind that never stops blowing. She is a delicate, pale woman with big sad blue eyes; in no way beautiful, grey of face, her hair thin and uncared-for, and a

mouth always half-open so that one sees her yellow, unbrushed teeth. Yet there is something attractive about her. One can't say why, but as one looks at her, one likes her instinctively.

She was alone with her children all winter, since her husband had gone with the sheep to the Bushveld and she did not want to accompany him because of the children's schooling. It had been very unpleasant for her as well as for him, those four long months alone, yet that had been her wish. Another month and then he would return with the sheep.

* * *

Marthinus Cloete treks with his sheep out of the Bushveld. It has become so warm that he can no longer stay there, and he has heard that fine rains have fallen along the road and that the grass is sprouting. But drought has again followed on the first rains; the young grass has wilted, and now once more he sees nothing but the old broad black patches, with an occasional grey tuft of grass. Over the scorched veld the sheep trek wearily and nibble at the sparse, tattered grass, slower, always slower and their heads more bent in their search for new stubbles. Behind them walks Marthinus Cloete. His tall, angular figure in its worn, faded clothes, moves stiffly forward in slow, plodding gait. A little ahead of him his wagon trundles along.

Ever slower the sheep trek, they are so thin and weak. Now and again one of them does not get up. Marthinus Cloete takes his knife and cuts its throat; and then walks on. So insignificant they all seem, the ragged flock of sheep and the man; so forlorn in this wide, oppressive desolation with the yellow sun above, the sun that consumes the rain and all coolness, and destroys the few remaining tufts of grass.

Every day more sheep do not get up. And he cuts their throats, so that the vultures will not find them alive. This is the worst of all, that one must kill the poor dumb creatures. They gaze at him with their familiar eyes; they ask for help, and then he must kill them. He is haunted by the fear that more will remain behind, and will not get up. Then he sees it always; while he walks, or as he sits by the fire in the evening or when he lies under the wagon before he drops off to sleep; even in his sleep always he sees it: a sheep lags behind, halts, then lies down.

At times he wishes they were all dead, so that there would be an end to it.

* * *

One morning she sees him coming and she hurries to meet him, but when she sees the small flock, she stops in horror. Are these the only sheep? Could so many have died? And she remains where she is and gazes at the sheep which slowly approach until they are beside her and pass her. Then she goes to her husband, greets him with a kiss, speechless.

In the house he slumps down wearily on one of the *kiste*. She sits down at the table and gazes at him with her sad, big eyes. But he looks straight ahead of him in dull despair. 'Half of them are dead,' he says. She does not answer but gets up and sits beside him. She leans against his shoulder and takes his hand in hers, but she says nothing. For a long time they sit like this, for it has been a hard blow. But she thinks mostly of him, and the hard time he has had. A longing rises in her to comfort him, but she finds no words. And she sits there quietly beside him and caresses his big, rough hand.

Wide is adversity around them, and there, as if shut in at its centre, anxious and alone, these two. They are very near to one another now.

Slowly he begins to question her and to tell her what has happened.

Portrait of an Old Man

LIVING, GIVING AND LEAVING MUCH

H. H. BRINDLEY

He's dead now, but when he moved in his flower garden, tender touching, I cared for him enough to dread his passing. At eighty-two he was remarkably modern; during the war he excelled at aircraft identification. As the planes flew over, he would look up, his whole body trembling with excitement; his admiration was touching; sometimes he just couldn't contain it, then he would prod up into the air with his stick and say: 'There they go, God bless 'em'—and, 'give it 'em lads', and not until the planes were distant blobs would he turn away, his keen eyes moist. During the summer he wore a straw-brimmer to potter round the garden, and a heavy-ribbed black cardigan; the latter he never discarded; if entreated to: 'Leave it off just this once!' his reply, varied in composition, never in essence was: 'What keeps the cold out keeps the heat out', the logic of which passed on unquestioned.

I undertook to dig his vegetable plot for him. In this, according to family comment, I had committed myself to a ghastly ordeal in which a time limit had been set by them of a fortnight.

I dug and set the whole plot, about thirteen rood, not without incident, it is true; be that as it may, the sages for once bowed their heads in my direction. During the summer, too, he managed several strolls along the lanes close by, engrossed in everything; stopping abrupt at any spot the urge came over him to look in short penetrating arcs. It seemed to me, on the occasions I went with him, that these stops could not be wholly attributable to old age; there were no visible signs of physical distress. They were rather, I think, a halt for spiritual replenishment, for a recharging of his cellular communicative equipment. It seemed as if the greenness of everything seeped through his pores and saturated him in its tranquillity, for he would start walking again, his face utterly peaceful. To these deductions of mine he unknowingly, one day, gave conviction in a statement he made. 'When you're out walking,' he said, 'with green all round, you lose your head. Give your heart a treat, m'lad. Flush it out.' This verbal broadside was usually followed by: 'The Lions of Judah shall break every chain', sung *fortissimo*. After this indulgence, he would proclaim how much freer he felt, and insist on someone trying it out, even extending his invitation to any visitor, totally unaware of their discomfort. I remember one volunteer accepting his invitation and meekly giving voice, only to be stopped short half-way through and told: 'Open your mouth, lad, and let it come out. You'll never break any chains screwing yourself up like you are!' The effect on the singer was one of complete disintegration, but recompense came later for the courageous one when he received a comforting pat on the shoulder and a voluminous wink. He could do anything with people and get the best out of them; put to the knife restricting cords of conventional behaviour and remain popular. He affirmed often that he expected no privileges because somehow or other he had lived to be eighty-two, nor did he expect anybody to put up with a silly old man!

What fascinated me most of all his old-age activities was the ritual of pipe-cleaning. First, he would spread out a sheet of paper on the table, then unstem each bowl, laying the relative pieces equidistant, in a row. Next, a cleaner was thrust and thrust down each pipe stem until daylight revealed no clinging tobacco leaf; the blow test came immediately afterwards—a trifle

exhibitionist I always thought. After the stem-cleaning came the bowls. Scorning the manufactured gadget, to which without doubt some poor inventor had given a terrifying amount of time and patience, he would reach for his clasp-knife, touch up the worn blade on a hexagonal steel and scrape away at the pipe bowl, puffing out his cheeks as an indication of applied pressure; sometimes his cheeks would stay puffed. I took it that was when the knife blade met the unscrapable deep down in the bowl at the outlet. He really enjoyed cleaning his pipes, though no more than I did watching him, and he always cleaned them in a special way at winter's approach.

Winter for him was a period of incubation; that is why, I think, he visibly clung to autumn's retreat, momentarily ignorant, it seemed, of a new and approaching equinox.

One winter night, I remember, the snow-flakes could be heard flicking against the window-panes on to an already ankle-deep fall. We sat, he and I, at the hob-sides of a log-reinforced coal-fire. On his hob the spills were to hand, newly cut. No one spoke; I sat staring into the bobbing flames, mildly surprised at their fleeting beauty; at their seeming peevishness when that which gave them form expended itself to an unproductive ember. Suddenly something told me to look at him. I looked and what I saw I can say was beautiful, not breath-taking as of a sunset, but in a sort of compact way; in small degree, but satisfying. It was his face soaked in the fire's light. He had fallen asleep; head slumped on his chest. It was as if the fire-light relieved his features. Every skin furrow gave way to an erasable willow-o'-the-wisp flick. The dewlap smoothed to the irresistible. For a fire's length a transformation. I watched in wonder. Or was it my imagination? Was his face no more than a projection of how I wanted him to look? I resented these queries. Analysis seemed superficial. I left reason out of it. I said to myself, 'I am seeing beauty; for this once I will not reach for the scalpel; I will enjoy it', and I did just that. The small kitchen now pulsed of him. He dwelt in the obvious and the odd corners: everywhere. Before I had been *with* him; now I was *of* him—part and parcel, a striking closeness, immaterial and indestructible. I re-looked, although still looking at him. His jaw sagged, strangely immobile, too immobile I knew. I sought a mirror quickly, held it to his open mouth. Where the tell-tale expiratory cloud? 'You must breathe,' I said out loud. One more straw to clutch though—the pulse. My finger-tips trembled on his wrist. Still, very still. Then did I accept the real, the absolute. I closed his eyes and turned away. Yet I thought it peculiar not to feel a cleft of emptiness, but perhaps I had seen more, much more, than his face lit by the fire's mere light. There could be no void, for there had been, for me, no departure.

WHOSE HAND I HAVE NEVER TOUCHED

TO NORMAN LEWIS

You Zeus, god, whose hand I have never touched
Whose back is turned ever towards me,
Who knows restraint but not restriction
Moderation but not meanness, shifting
Like lightning through space, seeking
Purification and its meteor death,
For whose encounter I have long waited,
And cast alone soliloquise with soft
Double pupilled eyes that raise in store
Some feline happiness, O Ravisher,
Turn to this your black dove and summer vice,
For after the battle and tribulation
There will remain only you upon the field
And your car that always passes by.

LYNETTE ROBERTS

ABSTRACT ART

ERIC NEWTON

SOONER or later abstract art was bound to appear. That its appearance was delayed until the second decade of the twentieth century is almost an accident—an accident easily explained—but now that it has reached years of discretion, we must seriously consider its future—its career, one might almost say, adopting the anxious tone of a parent or guardian. What is it going to *do*? What is to be its function? Was it, in its early stages, merely one of those over-emphatic, defiant gestures that a man makes in order to prove to other men that they have been victims of a set of false assumptions? Or is it still in its infancy? Is it a new mode of expression with infinite possibilities for development and a long, useful life ahead of it? It was bound to appear, but is it certain to persist?

If it is a protest against false assumptions, it is worth tracking those assumptions to their sources. Numberless painters have tried to explain the purport of their activity. Here is Alberti asserting, in 1436, that painters 'have no other aim than to make the shapes of things seen appear on the surface of a picture not otherwise than as if the surface were of transparent glass' —*trompe l'œil*, in fact—but he adds that the painter must 'take pains not only to achieve a good likeness . . . but to add beauty also.' There, perhaps for the first time, one senses the dilemma that has always pursued the painter. Is a work of art an imitation, a copy, a translation of *things* into *pigment*? Or is it a thing-of-beauty-in-its-own-right? 'Both,' answers Alberti, little knowing what his admission will eventually lead to.

Listen to Leonardo. 'Painting . . . is the sole imitator of all the visible works of nature', but 'whatever exists in the universe, whether in essence, in act, *or in the imagination* [my italics], the painter has first in his mind and then in his hands.' Another dilemma. You don't only imitate: you imagine. That, too, seems to open a door that might lead anywhere.

Listen to Michelangelo: 'Good painting is a copy of the perfections of God . . . it is a music and a melody which only intellect can understand.' The simple Albertian plot thickens, yet the basic argument remains the same. 'Painting imitates life.' The phrase is echoed by a thousand voices, yet it is always followed by a 'but'. And as the centuries pass, the 'but' grows bigger. Sometimes it is 'but be guided by the masters of the past, (see the Eclectics *passim*). Sometimes 'but follow the rules of design and colour' (see Poussin), or 'stick to the principles of Fitness, Variety, Uniformity, Intricacy and Quantity' (see Hogarth).

Soon a new voice is heard: 'Painting . . . selects in the universe whatever she deems most appropriate to her ends' (Goya), or 'The happy choice of forms and the right understanding of their relationship act on the imagination in the art of painting' (Delacroix). Here, at last, is a maxim that any abstract painter could accept, though doubtless Delacroix himself would have been astonished to know where his thought was leading.

The early nineteenth century, for all its lush sentiment, was fully aware of the problem of form versus content. 'Titian, Tintoret and Paul Veronese enchanted me,' says Allston in 1803, 'for they *took away all sense of subject.*' If that is genuine praise, then it is only a matter of time before the question is to be asked: 'Then why bother about subject?' True, it is a question that no Impressionist is going to ask, for Impressionism has just discovered the new aspect of nature—namely the vibration of light—which is crying out to be 'copied'. Impressionism, acting as a dam to the growing volume of aesthetic consciousness, held up the question for a

quarter of a century. But even in 1878 the dam was beginning to disintegrate. Here is Whistler writing: 'As music is the poetry of sound, so is painting the poetry of sight, and the subject-matter has nothing to do with harmony of sound or of colour.' And again in 1885: 'Nature contains the elements, in colour and form, of all pictures, as the keyboard contains the notes of music.' Odilon Redon's confession: 'A sheet of paper so shocks me that as soon as it is on the easel I am forced to scrawl on it . . . and this process gives it life,' leads straight into Braque's 'Colour has a reality in itself, a life of its own: a geometric form also has a reality in itself, independent and plastic. There never was any question in plastic art, in poetry, in music, of representing anything. It is a matter of making something beautiful.' And so on, through Kandinsky and Gabo to (perhaps the neatest of such statements) Wadsworth's 'A picture is primarily the animation of an inert plane surface by a spatial rhythm of forms and colours.'

Very well; abstract art, the animation of plane surfaces combined with the refusal to represent specific objects, was bound to come. What held back its arrival till the second decade of the twentieth century was largely habit, engendered by (*a*) Albertian theories of painting, and (*b*) the obligation of the painter to his patron to produce something with a specific subject for a specific purpose. That kind of patron, however, had almost ceased to exist by the middle of the nineteenth century, and all that was required was an artist courageous enough to put into practice the theories that Delacroix and Whistler had already expressed in words. Mondrian and Kandinsky completed the destruction of the Impressionist dam, and now there is nothing in abstract art to surprise or even puzzle the spectator.

Yet the spectator, no longer surprised, is a little discontented. The artist has at last earned the right to throw subject-matter overboard. He has done it in the name of 'freedom', of 'beauty', even of 'basis reality'—as opposed to 'superficial realism'—and now what? Does his new freedom, his removal of the tiresome obstacles between himself and the basic harmonies of form and colour give him more power? He has turned art into music; he plays with form as a composer plays with sound. Where, then, are the masterpieces of pure visual harmony that should have come into being as soon as the artist achieved his new freedom? Who, after thirty years, is the Giotto, the Masaccio, of abstract art?

Many names spring to mind, successors to Kandinsky and Mondrian. In England Ben Nicholson, and for a short period Wadsworth, and today William Gear and Victor Pasmore. In France a host of experimenters, some of them grim purists, others alternating between abstract and near-abstract, others making an occasional raid into abstract territory—but, alas, among their names there is not one that convinces us that painting has at last reached the destination to which it has been slowly moving since civilisation began.

It is not my purpose, in this short article, to define the word 'abstract', or to specify exactly what in a painting must be thrown overboard in order that it should qualify as an 'abstract'. I have sometimes listened, rather wearily, to heated arguments as to whether Picasso's Cubism of 1818, or any of Léger or Juan Gris deserved the name of abstract in its ultimate connotations. I am frankly indifferent to the strict meaning of the word. I am even prepared to argue that the word is indefinable and that, as between the extremes of, say, Mondrian's rectangular constructions on the one hand, and Caravaggio's tenebrist realism on the other, there is an infinite number of attitudes which an artist can take up towards the interpretation of specific visual experience.

But if the reader agrees with me that every art is tethered at one end of the scale to the specific limitations imposed on him by his eyesight, and at the other by his sense of how best to 'animate a plane surface', then I ask him also to agree with me that what really matters is the length of the tether. It would be theoretically possible to enumerate and arrange all the artists of the world in order, between the abstract extreme of Mondrian and the realistic extreme of Caravaggio. And once

the list has been drawn up (with Juan Gris very near to the Mondrian end, Velasquez fairly near the Caravaggio end, and Giovanni Bellini somewhere about the middle), it would at once become evident that the arrangement had nothing at all to do with merit. Artists of the highest genius would find themselves side by side with men of deplorable mediocrity at any and every point between the two extremes. Van Eyck and Meissonier would be surprised to discover that they were next-door neighbours. Picasso would be seated next to . . . —but here discretion intervenes. The point I wish to make is that the division of art into 'abstract' and 'figurative' is a comparatively unimportant one. What matters is that each artist must decide for himself whether the painter's task is to follow Alberti, on the one hand, and 'achieve a good likeness', or Braque's assertion, on the other, that 'there never was any question, in plastic art . . . of representing anything', or to pursue a middle course by *drawing on his visual experience in order to achieve the desired harmony of form and colour.*

The middle way is never quite as attractive as the extremes on either side of it. There is a simplicity about extremism that makes its creeds easy to defend. And since the extreme of visual realism has now been put out of court by the invention of photography and the discovery of pure aesthetics, the only extreme that can be honourably defended today is the extreme of abstract art. Other factors than photography have contributed to encourage the artist to produce it and the critic to praise it. As mankind becomes more literate, the province of description, once the painter's proud monopoly, has been invaded by the writer. The word 'literary' is now one of the most damaging in the art critic's vocabulary. And with the growth of the cinema there is no longer any place for narrative art. The frontiers of painting have shrunk; the artist's territory has diminished. Yet there he stands in the centre of his shrunken kingdom, proudly proclaiming that at least it has its own language—the language of colour and form, of pattern and texture —and that no invasion from adjacent arts can rob him of the right to use it and experiment with it. And no sensible person could say that he is mistaken in doing so. Nor could any sensible person deny that Picasso now has at his disposal a larger vocabulary, a more flexible syntax than Alberti or Leonardo ever had.

What, surely, is *not* sensible is the attitude of certain critics who assert that the artist has nothing to do but play with his vocabulary and experiment with his syntax. There is today a body of French critics whose passionate propaganda for abstract art is reminiscent of the one-sided loyalties of party politics, and seems almost to be based on an implication that the critic's function is to formulate a policy for artists to carry out. To the critic, who, like myself, assumes that his province is to assess the value of whatever the artist may be moved to create, such an attitude of mind is bewildering, and the labyrinths of polemics and special pleading, to which it gives rise, fill him with a suspicion that, while the means employed by the artist are being debated with the utmost ingenuity, the main purpose of art has been entirely forgotten.

Yet, unless the purpose of art is remembered—and from time to time restated—there can be no standard for judging the validity of the means. If the artist has no more to do than to invent harmonies of form and colour that will express his state of mind at a given moment and to externalise the emotional tensions that beset him, then abstract art will serve his purpose admirably. But only the simplest of human beings could be content so to divorce himself from the material world in which he lives, and only the most puritanical of spectators could be content to see him so divorced. What the abstract artist attempts to reach is the very core of the artistic apple, the very skeleton that holds the body of art in place and gives it firmness and strength. Yet a core without an apple, a skeleton without a body, is too fundamental to be interesting in its own right. The human being, at skeleton level, has shed most of its human attributes and has become a mere symbol of humanity, bereft of all those specific dreams and desires that have made the individual body so endearing in the past.

The abstract artist, in fact, in his search for ultimate purity, has achieved a kind of auto-castration, and in doing so he has made himself sterile. The forms and colours with which he 'animates' his canvas can never link themselves to his visual experience; they can only express his visual imagination. That thrilling orgasm in which a Titian or a Fra Angelico can make the visible world his own and beget a work of art that combines the essence of himself with the essence of the place and the time he lives in—that miracle is denied him, and all he can offer in its place is his innocence, his celibacy, his immunity from the temptations of the world and the flesh. The sensuous glory of a tree is denied him, and he must fall back on the abstractions of tree-ness and spring-ness.

I have stated the case *for* him as fairly as I can. It is a logical case. But the case against him is a humanist case and only in an epoch which is essentially non-humanist could it be forgotten. We live in such an epoch, and we have the abstract artists we deserve. Like an emetic, they have purged us of a great deal of silly nineteenth-century sentiment; like a professor of anatomy, they have revealed the permanent, the timeless bones beneath the perishable flesh. Yet the perishable flesh, in all its ephemeral weakness, will assert itself again. The body can be purified by an emetic, but it can't be nourished by it. It can be explained by the anatomist, but the anatomist cannot teach us to enjoy it.

MARINO MARINI

FIVE NEW SCULPTURES

1 *Cavaliere, 1951, Bronze* — *Ingersoll Collection, Philadelphia and the sculptor himself*

2 *Igor Stravinsky, 1950, Bronze* — *Stravinsky Collection, Los Angeles*

3 *Ritratto, 1950, Bronze* — *Mattioli Collection, Milan*

4 *Cavallo, 1946, Bronze* — *Collection of the sculptor, Milan*

5 *Pomona, 1950, Bronze* — *Walker Collection, Scotland*
(*Now on loan to Tate Gallery*)

Photographs by Herbert List

MARINO MARINI

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Igor Stravinsky

Pomona

Cavallo

ALFRED STEVENS

MOTHER AND CHILD Alfred Stevens

By kind permission of the Trustees of the Tate Gallery

'MOTHER AND CHILD'

BERTRAM NICHOLLS

When Alfred Stevens was a boy of fifteen, his benefactors, desirous of encouraging a lad of promise, put him on a ship bound for Naples. His education had been rudimentary; he spoke no Italian; his knowledge of the world was such as might be derived from a childhood passed in the little country town of Blandford; and he had sixty pounds in his pocket. He stayed some ten years in Italy, travelling, mostly on foot, from one centre to another, and shifting for himself as best he might. This experience constituted his training as an artist, and it proved an incomparably good one. He landed in Naples an unusually talented and promising boy. He returned to England the most completely-equipped artist of his time.

Whatever he turned his hand to, he was a master craftsman. He had indeed the universality of certain outstanding artists of the Italian Renaissance, and he had one shining quality that has not been among the more conspicuous virtues of English painting as a whole: he had taste. His easel pictures are few in number, and the best of them unsurpassable in quality. The knowledge that he had made skilful copies of Titian has led some observers, or I think it has, to find a Venetian influence in such pictures as the 'Mrs. Collmann' and the 'John Morris Moore'. I see nothing specifically Venetian in either. They are simply magnificently painted, and are quite dissimilar both in conception and treatment. They might be by different hands equally gifted in different ways. The unfinished 'Mother and Child', here reproduced, is indeed palpably by the same hand as the 'Mrs. Collmann', and in the head of the child, and only in the head of the child, a formative Italian influence can plainly be seen. It is in the grand manner, and there is something very Italian in the insistence, not merely on the silhouette, but on an actual contour, and in the emphasis on draughtsmanship.

When the picture was painted, the mother was a dying woman, and she died before it could be finished. In its incompleteness there is gain as well as loss. In the lower left-hand corner, the child's hand and arm have all but disappeared, waiting to be redrawn where the white frock has been painted over them. Lower down there is a dragged scumble over the dark ground, and on this the mother's hand has been indicated with consummate draughtsmanship. It is outlined with a thin stain, a mere breath of colour suggesting the flesh, and it derives remarkable expressiveness from the touches of light—as thin as a hair—relieving the contours of the index and middle fingers. All this is so full of suggestion, and so painter-like, that it would be a pity to lose it even to gain the superb perfection of the 'Mrs. Collmann'. Even this perfection is matched, however, in the painting of the mother's dress, stripes and all, where a greyish over-painting, influenced by the reddish ground, gives the subtlest effect of colour.

The effect of the whole has been evoked by playing on the dark-reddish ground with thin stains to mark contours and darker masses, with light scumbles, and with impasto in the stronger lights. The chiaroscuro is admirable, the disposition of lights and darks being most skilfully controlled. The dark of the background plays through the whole picture. It runs down unchanged through the darker parts of the mother's dress; it runs from top to bottom of the canvas with just the interruption of a bit of sleeve; it is behind the patterned chair in the lower right-hand corner, and is only just warmed a little in the lower left-hand corner. Even in the beautifully-painted hair the unifying ground is only enriched to a chestnut colour.

The picture is without any bold lights, and has only one note of strong, positive colour—the red of the child's dress—yet its rich forcefulness carries the whole length of the gallery where it hangs. Stevens worked in many materials, and it may almost be said that he was only an occasional painter in oils, but there has been no painter of comparable artistry anywhere in the Western world since Alfred Stevens died.

POEM ON HIS BIRTHDAY

DYLAN THOMAS

In the mustardseed sun,
By eely river and switchback sea
Where the cormorants scud,
In his house on stilts high among beaks
And palavers of birds
This sandgrain day in the bent bay's grave
He celebrates and spurns
His driftwood thirty fifth wind turned age;
Herons spire and spear.

Under and round him go
Flounders, gulls, on their cold, dying trails,
Doing what they are told,
Curlews aloud in the congered waves
Work at their ways to death,
And the rhymer in the long tongued room,
Who tolls his birthday bell,
Toils towards the ambush of his wounds;
Herons, on one leg, bless.

In the thistledown fall,
He sings towards anguish; finches fly
In the claw tracks of hawks
On a seizing sky; small fishes glide
Through the lull of the drowned
Lanes to the pastures of otters. He
In his winged, making house
And the hewn coils of his trade perceives
Herons walk in their shroud,

The livelong river's robe
Of minnows rippling around their prayer;
And far at sea he knows,
Who slaves afraid to his fiery end
In a spiralling cloud,
Dolphins dive in their turnturtle dust
And the streaking seals pounce
To kill and it is their own blood runs,
Sleek and good in the mouth.

In a cavernous, swung
Sea's silence, cypress angelus knells.
Thirty-five bells sing struck
On seasnailed rocks where his loves lie wrecked,
Steered by the falling stars.
And tomorrow weeps in a blind cage
Terror will rage apart
Before chains break to a hammer flame
And love unbolts the dark

And freely he goes lost
In the unknown, famous light of great
And fabulous, dear God.
Dark is a way and light is a place,
Heaven that never was
Nor will be ever is always true,
And, in that brambled void,
Plenty as blackberries in the woods
The dead grow for His joy.

There he might wander bare
With the spirits of the horseshoe bay
Or the stars' seashore dead,
Marrow of eagles, the roots of whales
And wishbones of wild geese,
With blessed, unborn God and His Ghost,
And every soul his priest,
Gulled and joyful in young Heaven's fold
Be at cloud-quaking peace,

But dark is a long way.
He, on the earth of the night, alone
With all the living, prays,
Who knows the rocketing wind will blow
The bones out of the hills,
And the scythed boulders writhe, and the last
Rage shattered waters kick
Masts and fishes to the still quick stars,
Faithlessly unto Him

Who is the light of good
And gulling heaven where souls grow wild
As windflowers in the woods:
Oh, may this birthday man by the shrined
And aloof heron's vows
Mourn until the night pelts down and then
Count his blessings aloud!
May he make, in his thirty-fifth death,
His last sweet will and shroud.

4

THE GRAVE THAT TIME DUG

MURIEL SPARK

This is the grave that time dug.
This is the box
that lay in the grave that time dug.
This is the hand
that rapped on the box
that lay in the grave that time dug.
This is the stove
that warmed the hand
that rapped on the box
that lay in the grave that time dug.

This is the child an instant born
that lit the stove
that warmed the hand
that rapped on the box
that lay in the grave that time dug.
This is the pink deceptive thorn
that bled the child an instant born
that lit the stove
that warmed the hand
that rapped on the box
that lay in the grave that time dug.

This is the alderman bound and sworn
that planted the pink deceptive thorn
that bled the child an instant born
that lit the stove
that warmed the hand
that rapped on the box
that lay in the grave that time dug.
This is the chain that is always worn
by all the aldermen bound and sworn
that planted the pink deceptive thorn
that bled the child an instant born
that lit the stove
that warmed the hand
that rapped on the box
that lay in the grave that time dug.

4

NEW BOOKS

THE UNITED STATES IN WORLD AFFAIRS—1950

By Richard P. Stebbins. *Harper & Bros.* 35s.

Reviewed by Christopher Hollis

This is an excellently compiled and most full account of the world picture and the part that the United States played in forming or preventing it throughout 1950. It is written for the American public, but Mr. Stebbins makes no attempt to show that the faults lie all on the side of those who have differed from Americans or that Americans have no share in the blame for misunderstanding. The impartiality of tone and the absence of obtrusive argument in a factual record make all the more impressive the warning which clearly underlines Mr. Stebbins's narrative. It is common enough for us to comfort ourselves by pointing out how immeasurably greater are the resources of the free world than the resources of the Communist States. This strength is, we admit, at the moment only a potential strength. It is unlikely on the whole that Russia will attack even now because, whatever initial successes she might win, her final defeat would be inevitable. In a few years' time, when our rearmament has come to bear its fruit, she will have no chance of even initial successes, and then we shall be able to talk with her from strength.

It is the value of Mr. Stebbins's book that it reminds us how these easy assumptions are all based upon a supposition which we have no right to take for granted—the supposition that the free world will remain united. It is perfectly clear that the Communists are as well aware as we are that, if you tot up the total of their resources, it comes to a great deal less than the total of the resources of the rest of the world, nor can they be such fools as to imagine that they have a chance of victory against a united world. But that does not by any means say that they have not a chance of victory. For the events of 1950 showed, as Mr. Stebbins so well tells us and as the events of 1951 have shown yet more clearly, how very grave are the dangers of disunity in the free world. The Korean attack aroused for the moment a remarkably united reaction from the rest of the world. It may be that the Communists were unpleasantly surprised at that unity. But, equally, those who at once rushed to make speeches, as if by this one common resolution to resist aggression, the whole danger of the situation degenerating into war had been banished from the earth, had spoken far too soon.

Whatever may have been decided at Cairo years ago and in totally different circumstances, no sane person can have expected the Americans to allow Formosa to pass into Communist Chinese hands while Communist forces were in open aggression against the United Nations. But whether it was wise for President Truman challengingly to mention Formosa in his first message about Korean aggression and before the Chinese had had even an opportunity of showing their reaction to the Korean situation, is another question. In any event, as we all sadly know, while there was unanimity at Lake Success in condemning the North Korean action, as soon as it became evident that the repulse of the North Korean army was not going to be an easy police-action, it became apparent that there was no sort of unanimity about Far Eastern policy. The Asiatic nations—India, Persia, and Egypt in particular—soon made it abundantly clear that they had no intention whatsoever of allowing themselves to be dragged into an invasion of China or an anti-Communist crusade. On the contrary, they were only too ready to use Communism as a convenient card in order to extract a price out of the Americans for not declaring themselves Communist. British Socialists, though they well knew that they would have to pipe to the tune of their American paymasters in the end, yet often thought to preserve their self-respect by a good deal of

incidental criticism. Neither German nor French opinion was keen to be dragged into a war unless it could be assured that it would be not only liberated but defended. And in their turn all these ungrateful criticisms, as they seemed to many Americans, caused a formidable reaction in the United States, and leaders, like Mr. Hoover, were saying ever more loudly and to ever louder applause: 'Let the rest of the world then sink if it wants to. It is more trouble than it is worth. Let us return, not indeed to American isolationism but to American freedom—to a situation where America goes where she wishes to go and refrains where she wishes to refrain, in accordance with her own judgment. She would be stronger alone than at the head of this purposeless and jabbering coalition.'

Mr. Stebbins shows that, whatever the judgments to which impatience may be tempted, the rest of the world does in fact need American material help and America for her part must pay 'a decent respect' to world opinion and continue to carry it along with her.

HUSKISSON AND HIS AGE

By C. R. Fay. *Longmans.* 30s.

Reviewed by Max Beloff

William Huskisson is remembered in the history books for his tenure of the Board of Trade in the 1820's, and for his rôle in forwarding the movement towards free trade and a more modern (or what before our neo-mercantilist lunacy one might have called more modern) financial policy. He is thus a sort of bridge-figure between the younger Pitt, on the one hand, and Peel and Gladstone on the other. In Mr. Fay's eyes he is also a great imperial statesman. But this climax of Huskisson's official career is reserved for a second volume of the present work.

This first volume deals with the 'age' rather than the man; but not in the ordinary sense. There is no effort at a general picture of the England of the Regency and of George IV, but rather a series of discursive pieces, plentifully illustrated with new material from many sources, that have been suggested to the author in the course of his preparation for the major study. Sometimes the matters under consideration deal with Huskisson directly; light is thrown upon the early railway age by considering the circumstances of the dramatic accident in which he lost his life at the opening of the Liverpool–Manchester railway; the electoral habits of the pre-Reform Bill era are illustrated by Huskisson's own complicated parliamentary career. But other matters—the Crown's policy with regard to its London properties, the rise of Liverpool, the project for solving Ireland's economic difficulties by introducing silkworm culture on a large scale—are connected to Huskisson by fairly remote threads; and this is also true of some of the individuals of greater or lesser note—J. C. Herries, Sturges Bourne and Wilmot Horton, who get brief biographies. When one comes to the politics of Staffordshire, which Mr. Fay gives reasons for regarding as the political hub of Regency England, we get a lot of interesting material on the efforts of E. J. Littleton (Lord Hatherton) on behalf of the Reform Bill and the Truck Act, which actually relate to a period after Huskisson was dead.

It is, as one can see, a most unusual book. And its oddness is emphasised by the author's habit of introducing himself and his own experiences into the course of the narrative, which from time to time relapses into a mere string of documents tied together more or less by brief notes. Some people dislike being buttonholed at any time; and the device is unfamiliar among academic historians, while the more general reader might wish that Mr. Fay did not so readily assume his familiarity with the technical controversies, particularly the controversies over currency, with which his hero was connected. But if one must be buttonholed, it is nice that it should be by someone with Mr. Fay's vast learning and ready enthusiasm for all that illuminates, however obliquely, a vital period in the great history of Britain's economic development. It is a book that many will skip; but I suspect that many illustrations and quotations in more conventional histories in the future will be traceable ultimately to this volume; while in the second, Mr. Fay will have the opportunity to show that his talents are expository no less than anecdotal.

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CASSELL BOOKS

RULERS OF MECCA

By Gerald de Gaury. *Harrap.* 21s.

THE MAHDIYA

By A. B. Theobald. *Longmans.* 21s.

Reviewed by H. S. Deighton

It was curiosity about the natural world and the application of the knowledge that arose from it which enabled the peoples of Western Europe to become the explorers of the greater part of the globe and then, for more than a century, its arbiters. From the first, and naturally, their native curiosity was extended to the lands and inhabitants so discovered. This study was early made systematic. The establishments of the Levant Company in the Ottoman Empire were the cradles of English oriental studies. Oxford had a Chair of Arabic from the time of Archbishop Laud, whose most distinguished first occupant had acquired, as he subsequently refreshed, his knowledge by means of something very like a seventeenth-century travelling fellowship. With the growth of British political interest in the Middle East, the appetite of the British people for such information became almost voracious. The course of the 'Eastern Question' throughout the nineteenth century was accompanied by a flood of books on the Ottoman Empire and its peoples. In the circumstances it is odd that his publishers are able to claim for Colonel de Gaury's new book that it is the first full-length account in the language of the fifteenth-century-long tenure of the rulership of Mecca by members of the tribe of Qoraish.

The holy city of Islam was never its capital. The Arab armies moved north under Abu Bekr a few years after the Prophet's death, on what, in the author's opinion, was probably no more than a raid. But they found their northern neighbours, Persian and Byzantine, so weak that, like the later Scandinavian marauders in Western Europe, but in shorter time and on a much greater scale, they stayed to rule. Mecca became an object of veneration to an ever-growing part of the world, but for all other purposes it remained a backwater. The Qoraish, who had assumed the guardianship of the still-pagan sanctuary in the fifth century, were the tribe of the Prophet and continue to furnish the ruler of the city after his work had made it the most holy place of half of the Western world. Colonel de Gaury traces the succession of these rulers until it was broken by the accession, by way of conquest, of the present ruler of Saudi Arabia and with it Mecca itself. His book lacks the organic quality of history proper —in the nature of things it could not be otherwise—and reads not unlike one sort of mediæval monastic chronicle. It is an almost year-by-year account of strictly local events, of natural phenomena, comets and eclipses, and of references to developments in the wider world. These last grow in number from the establishment of Ottoman suzerainty over the Hijaz in the early sixteenth century until the last Qoraish ruler of Mecca became involved in the course of great events which brought to an end the dominion of both his suzerain the Sultan and himself.

The downfall of the Sultan was in part at least due to the infection of the peoples of his empire with the characteristic Western sentiment of nationality. In this Arab nationalism—and the aspiration of the ruler of Mecca to the kingship of a united Arab State—played a major rôle. Nationalism in the Sudan is a phenomenon of more recent date. The lands of the upper Nile were at times, in antiquity, the homes of powerful and independent States. Only rarely were they linked politically with Egypt. In the early nineteenth century the Egyptian ruler, Muhammad Ali—the 'founder of Modern Egypt'—occupied his troops and acquired experience of desert warfare by wresting Mecca and much of Arabia from the Wahabis, who held it by conquest as they do today. This done, he turned his attention to the Sudan and established that ascendancy over it upon which Egypt today bases her claim for 'the unity of the Nile Valley'. The degeneration in Egyptian affairs, which gave rise to the British intervention, early affected the Sudan. Egyptian misrule provoked the rising under the Mahdi, which gave infinite trouble to the British Government and provided the Sudan with a régime from the death of Gordon until the re-occupation under Kitchener at the end of the century. Mahdism was hardly

synonymous with order, but it was by no means mere savagery—and certainly produced much better human beings than could have flourished under the 'detestable barbarities and crimes of the Egyptian rulers', of which *The Times* correspondent wrote in 1883. Today, as the Sudanese approach self-government once more, the Mahdiya plays an important part in their national consciousness. Mr. Theobald's careful, understanding study is at once timely and readable.

A SELF-GOVERNING DOMINION: CALIFORNIA, 1849-1860

By W. H. Ellison. *California University Press: Cambridge University Press.* 34s.

The centenary in 1950 of California's admission to the Union as the thirty-first State has helped to increase the already considerable output of Californian historical writing. To look back a century, as Mr. Ellison does in his scholarly work, is to be conscious that the apparently inevitable rise of this great Pacific community to its present rank and significance was by no means the inevitable process that it might now appear. When California was annexed from Mexico, its connections with the rest of the Union were substantially those of an overseas settlement and for a decade and more until the Civil War, and the eventual building of the long-planned Pacific railway, its history was something apart from that of the parent country. As Mr. Ellison shows, even the demand for the creation of two or three States instead of one arose not from the slavery issue that was dividing the parent nation, but from local questions such as the difference of interest between the pastoral South with its Spanish-speaking landholding class, and the new inrush of gold-miners in the North.

But the dominance of the American element early asserted itself; and the primary theme of the series of more or less independent essays, of which this volume consists, is the adaptation of American ideas on government, administration and politics to a frontier community of a more than usually rapid growth and of more than usually turbulent disposition. On the political side, the founders of the new State

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showed in their constitutional convention and early legislatures—even the maligned 'legislature of a thousand drinks'—a great deal of wisdom and common sense. But on the administrative side, and particularly where the administration of justice was concerned, the picture is a less rosy one. Despite later romanticising, the story of the vigilantes is, as Mr. Ellison shows, a far from creditable one; and though it represents in part the reaction of respectable citizens against lawlessness, there is far too much of mob hysteria and sadism, and of a distinct racialist overtone for the whole thing to be regarded as anything but an unfortunate lapse from which Californians are to be credited with having at least recovered with decent speed. The story of the dealings with the Californian Indians is again not highly creditable; though here, the Californians' attitude was no worse than that of other frontiersmen. There is a price for expansion and progress; and it is to the credit of American historians of this generation that they find no need to conceal the fact.

OUT OF THIS WORLD

By Lowell Thomas, Jr. *Macdonald.* 18s.

Reviewed by Henry Baerlein

When Mr. Lowell Thomas's much-travelled father had the opportunity to go with his son to Tibet, it took him, we are told, all of a minute to accept the invitation. The Tibetans were anxious to display their anti-Communism in the hope that the United States would sympathise—perhaps actively—in their differences with the Chinese. Their choice fell on the Lowell Thomases, for which the readers of this book will be most grateful. In these pages we become acquainted with all the leading personages of Tibet.

Among other Tibetans whom we meet there is Tsarong Shapé, who has risen from being the son of a humble artisan to be called the 'Rockefeller of Tibet'. And there is the Englishman Reggie Fox, the radio operator, photographed with his Tibetan wife who was, like various other high-born Tibetans, educated in India. Fox had the complete confidence of the Tibetans and though for years he suffered anguish from arthritic gout, he refused to give up his job at Lhasa.

RACINE: A CRITICAL BIOGRAPHY

By Geoffrey Brereton. *Cassell.* 22s. 6d.

Reviewed by John Cocking

Dr. Brereton's biography of Racine is a book for the reader who likes to consider the evidence for himself and not for those who look to biographers to provide more convincingly human novels. Louis Racine, the son and first biographer of the dramatist, produced a narrative with plenty of dramatic possibilities disposed along the parallel curves of the break, and final reconciliation with the Jansenists and the flight to the summit of royal favour followed by decline and disgrace, the most dramatic incident of all being the accusation that he had poisoned his mistress, the Du Parc. Dr. Brereton calls the three parts of his work 'The Varied Prospect', 'Through the Jungle' and 'The Promised Land', but his narrative does not follow the rhythm suggested by these titles, and cuts its way steadily and assuredly through the jungle of conflicting legends towards a land of common sense and sweet reasonableness. Racine at the age of thirty he sees as neither 'tender' nor 'pious' nor 'immoral', but characterised by 'intelligence, worldliness with a dash of arrogance, sensuality with a tinge of sentimentality'.

This matter-of-fact account of the man in no way hides Dr. Brereton's admiration for the work, though in his criticism he is unwilling to go further than common sense and traditional lines of approach will take him. Refreshing as this is, it surrounds the clear but limited area of understanding with an unrelievedly black night of mystery. The quality which makes Racine a 'purer' poet than Mallarmé 'eludes definition', says Dr. Brereton; but after all, he suggests, Racine's verse was a means to an end. When it comes to defining the end, the emphasis is on virtuosity of construction. Beyond this, 'the greatest of Racine's innovations was to regard the passion of love as a disease . . .' Dr. Brereton reminds us of what too much subtlety—aesthetical, psychoanalytical or mythical—may have made us forget, and makes a number of subtle comments of his own variety.

THE POEMS OF C. V. CAFAVY

Translated by John Mavrogordato.

The Hogarth Press. 12s. 6d.

Reviewed by P. M. Fitzgerald

The new translation of Cafavy's poems has brought forward people who knew him well and whose testimony to his personal charm seems to be recreating him as a kind of Apollinaire. All this was in a golden period before many of today's readers were born and they may feel, in Burnand's phrase, that it's very unfair there should ever have been such a time. But in this scholarly edition by Professor Mavrogordato, a translation from the complete works of 1935, everyone can study the magically sophisticated poet of Alexandria.

Cafavy's poems are fascinating for two reasons: because he invented for himself an antique world of Alexandria, mixed, impure, bizarre, and melancholy, where Greeks, Jews, pagans and sophists are quietly cheated by history, and the pageants and jewellery are made ridiculous by the town councillors who are ready with a 'victory address' for any occasion.

'Why have our two consuls gone out, both of them, and the Praetors
Today with their red togas on, with their embroidered togas?
Why are they wearing bracelets, and all those amethysts too,
And all those rings on their fingers with splendid flashing emeralds?
Why should they be carrying today their precious walking sticks,
With silver knobs and golden tops so wonderfully carved?
Because the Barbarians will arrive today:
Things of this sort dazzle the Barbarians.

But later on:

'Why are all the streets and squares emptying so quickly,
And everybody turning home again so full of thought?
Because night has fallen and the Barbarians have not come.
And some people have arrived from the frontier;
They say there are no Barbarians any more,

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And now what will become of us without
Barbarians?
Those people were some sort of a solution.'

This quotation with its Mediterranean irony is from one of Cafavy's best-known poems, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, and they lead on to his other great source of fascination, I mean the blend, in his personal lyrics, of wistfulness with fearless amorality.

'Be afraid of grandeurs, O my soul;
And if you cannot conquer your ambitions
With hesitations always and precautions
Follow them up . . .'

These hesitations and precautions and recognition of littleness are familiar and dear to us because we were 'raised' on Eliot and Jules Laforgue. We expect the poet to love pleasure and to make this kind of confession, but we expect him also to repent and to torture himself with doubt. But Cafavy doesn't do this. His regret is only that life passes and hair becomes grey and streets unrecognisable. Pleasure, he tells us, however disreputable the world may find it, is the foundation of all that is important in his art.

'And that is why my repentances were never lasting.
My resolutions to control myself, to change,
Used to endure for two weeks at most.'

He is a writer of anti-climaxes, of uncomfortable irony and disconcerting echoes, but in his love-poems he is agonisingly direct and clear.

'At evening when he went—
He chanced to have business,
A need of breadwinning—
To the café where
They used to go together.
A knife in his heart
Was the dark café where
They used to go together.'

CHÉRI
THE LAST OF CHÉRI

By Colette. *Secker & Warburg.* 10s. 6d.

Reviewed by Stevie Smith

Chéri and the Last of Chéri are in one volume, and the English translation, which is always excellent, is by Roger Senhouse. In his introduction Mr. Raymond Mortimer says of Madame Colette: 'Her subject-matter is carefully limited to the life of the senses', and he scolds the English for the words he puts into their mouth: 'How odd to treat cookery as an exacting art; and, worse still, to elevate love-making into an erudite almost religious ritual. 'The puritan,' he says, 'the go-getter and the mystic will agree in being shocked by her scale of values.' But so of course will the realist, for it is matter of painful experience that in no field does the law of diminishing returns more dreadfully operate than in the physical. And when he suggests that a material reward for the conferring of physical pleasure is traditional, widespread and by implication sensible, he seems to be reasoning in terms of effort.

One must not underrate Colette, but one need not make a phenomenon of her; round *that* corner is the Emperor and his clothes. The story of Chéri is also the story of Lea, a portrait of a wealthy prostitute. She is a warm-hearted, ripe beauty of forty-five or so and she knows that she is lazy. Once she thinks of opening a shop or a night club. But, 'No,' she says, 'get back to your bed, Lea, you will never have any other workplace but that.' She also congratulates herself on never having had to accept the advances of elderly gentlemen. But these tonic glimpses of the bases of prostitution are but fleeting; too often, as in the Claudine books, a false romanticism lends a sickly and obscuring air. Lea borrows the young Chéri from a rich prostitute-friend (the times are opulent, leading up to the 1914 war). She falls in love with this cold self-seeking creature and he feels at home with her, like a cat. Throughout the book there are Madame Colette's loving, beautiful and brilliant descriptions of everything and everybody; of the bedroom with its old-fashioned ornate bed, and the whole rosy pink house.

It is a world of shrewd dealings with cooks, and the Stock Exchange, a mixture of the practical and the abandoned which is very interesting. Chéri makes a marriage of convenience with Edmée, well-dowered daughter of a retired prostitute. In the end, when he comes back to Lea and finds that she has grey short hair, has left off her corsets and is a sexless, happy, careless 'old girl', he shoots himself, which is not quite in character. The debilitating atmosphere, the beautiful long eyelashes of Chéri, the glistening skin, and towards the end, the hair getting thinner and the eye rheumy—all this is a soft relaxing visit for the reader who is neither a prostitute nor a liver on prostitutes. He will feel he is suffocating sometimes, but he can always go home.

PORIUS

By John Cowper Powys. *MacDonald & Co.* 15s.

Reviewed by Neill Fisher

Mr. Powys has chosen North Wales for the scene of his Arthurian Romance, and for the occasion the year A.D. 499—as good a guess as any for the date of the battle of Mount Badon. Those, however, who expect credible explanation of the identity of King Arthur will be disappointed.

The whole narrative is so confused by the disconnectedness of the main incidents that it would be difficult to understand the purpose of the whole, were it not for the great skill with which the characters are drawn. The Herculean Prince Porius, his foster-brother Rhun, the Princess Morfydd, and the Roman Patrician Porius Manlius are living people, and Merlin emerges as a real, though inhuman and portentous, figure. It is with Merlin, the Christian priests, and the last of the Druids that the author is most successful. Orthodox Christian hates Pelagian heretic more bitterly than him who 'has unreason in his heart because of the gods that were'. The Druid discusses the Trinity with the Christian Porius, but calls in the godless Saxon to dispossess the Christian Arthurian chivalry, and behind them all loom the gigantic figure of Merlin, as old as Cronos, and the necrophile Mordred.

Those who wish to catch the atmosphere of Britain in the Dark Ages will find that Mr. Powys has caught it for them.

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THE DAUGHTER OF TIME By Josephine Tey. *Peter Davies.* 9s. 6d.

Reviewed by Stevie Smith

The Master lies dying of inoperable cancer. His well-born wife, never on terms with him for all her feelings of affection, too well disguised, must hide the truth from him, that he will never get better; so must his upright stormy daughter, and so must the Fellows of this ancient Cambridge college. Six months he has to live, or so the doctors say. But even as he spends out his dying life, the Fellows must begin thinking whom they shall choose for his successor. The poison works in ambitious veins, the corruption of disease begins also in them, but theirs is a spiritual disease and the end of it is not death but power. Dr. Snow has written a masterpiece of a storm in a teacup, a masterpiece of teacup-poisoning to run in the moral fibres. But this is no ordinary teacup; it is a small infernal grail that slops overboard the wicked blood from the world's black heart. The scene is so sharply set, the argument so close, the light so pitiless as it falls on these wriggling dons, unhappy in their desire for power in diverse forms, that the novel seems short, though you might have judged it long for so bare a theme. The narrator is Lewis Eliot and this book is one of eleven that have been, and are to be, written about this man. Again one might say a touch of irony should be given to the narration, but how then could the suffering be shown as something so sad for all its absurdity, disgusting too, and the pain so sharp? The author was certainly right to have this man who is only half there, because of his legal absences, not quite in it, yet friend, confident and voter, to tell the tale. The choice for the new Master lies between two men. On the one side is Thomas Crawford, a man of strong character, sure of himself, a scientist, a man with a sense of the world outside that is shaping for war (the year is 1937) and an anxious shrewd thought for his country's unpreparedness; he knows that the Master must speak to the world as well as to the college, and speak with authority and judgment. On the other side is Paul Jago, a humanist, a likable man, a man of mercurial temper, uncertain of himself and confirmed in this uncertainty by the mishap of a wife so eminently unsuited to academic or domestic life that it is difficult to understand why anyone puts up with her, let alone loves or likes her—a weakness in the book, if it is to stand alone. Mr. Jago has not been more than a few pages on the scene, in his first fretful embarrassing interview with his friend Eliot, before another weakness becomes apparent. Whoever in his senses would have put forward such a man for the Mastership? The fact is the field is not a wide one. Winslow is out of it, a bitter, disappointed man—his vote is cast in a manner typical of his prickly pedantry: 'Mr. Winslow elects Dr. Crawford and signs his name Godfrey Harold Winslow'; he is a man who has never achieved even the enigmatic distinction of being judged capable of ruling provided he is not put on. Dr. Snow is not a harsh creator; there are reasons for Winslow's suffering situation. Roy Calvert (whose fascination the author imperfectly communicates) will vote for Jago because he dislikes Crawford's Left-wing tendencies. Francis Getliffe, a highly interesting person, shares your reviewer's surprise at the mere suggestion of Jago as Master. Chrystal plays Judas, putting up his dear friend and staunch Jago-ite, Arthur Brown, as interloping third candidate, to spoil the grim fun. And so it goes on, with many a fascinating human creature combed out with crafty compassion. The old man Gay is a particularly happy specimen. A mischievous creature, wrapped up in his Saga-Men and the fame his researches have brought him, he tells of the monstrous cat, padding approving paws, and says

'that was a cat and a half.' Dr. Snow is at his most impressive with a small canvas; this is one of his best books.

Miss Nancy Mitford has hit on a prime recipe for success; she is light-hearted, funny, born into society, and perfectly at home in the cultivated traveller's dream of sophisticated Parisian society—in a word, she is thoroughly conventional, never making fun of fashion, only of morals. There are many English people who like to think of France and the French as she presents them—a France entirely free of sentimentality, meanness and the tedium of middle-class life so richly explored by the masters of French literature. It is odd that she can have lived so long in France and still write like a talented visitor. However, one must not take her too seriously, as she would be the first to say. Her heroine is a monumental English beauty, a dreamy beautiful girl of family, who marries such a dashing romantic brave Frenchman as seldom stepped outside a novelette. The book gives the passages of this marriage: first it is on and then it is off and then it is on again. In and out of it dance the light-foot characters, the girl's distinguished francophile father, who gets on well with his son-in-law and cannot bear 'all the fuss' (his daughter has found her husband embracing a girl cousin—the guide threw open the indiscreet door to the tourists, and there he was). There is also the little son, *The Blessing*, of the title. He soon learns that divorcing parents may be brought to outbid each other for his favours and aims to keep them apart. It is a skilful, bright tale, but compared with *Love in a Cold Climate*, it has sometimes the anxious gaiety of a lady who fears the years. Only in her portrait of the American publicist is there nothing tired or ageing. Painted in the lively hues of hatred controlled and absolute, he, you might say, is glory enough.

Miss Manning is a scrupulous and gifted writer who will admit no compromise. For her the novel is a work of art or it is nothing. There is a ferocity and exclusiveness in this attitude; one recognises a Danton ('Danton, no weakness'). In her last novel, *Artist Among the Missing*, there was also at

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times a hint of bad temper. No pettishness mars this book. The hero is a boy of fifteen called Felix. Felix's mother has just died in Cairo, and Felix has come to Jerusalem. First he stayed with some friends in Cairo who put him up for friendship's sake, but sadly the poor child learns that friends are not mothers and go he must. Now he is in the cab in Jerusalem on the way to Miss Bohun's. 'Up there all Arabs, down there all Jews,' cries the driver, wishing to comfort him. Miss Bohun's house is cold; Miss Bohun is a mean maniac. What can Felix learn about love in this house? He loves the little cat, and he loves the beautiful young lady with painted nails and long legs who comes to live in the house. He loves her madly and frequents fast cafés in her company. Then the posthumous baby is coming along and Felix marvels how the love he felt turns to indifference, but there is always the little Siamese cat, his dear pet. Meanwhile around him rage the storms of the house. Miss Bohun comes in for the sharpest of Miss Manning's darts. She has filched the house from the refugee lady and her wordly son; they are now her servants. She is also a maniacal Adventist. She keeps a room neat for the Saviour and rallies her little band of disciples who are called the Ever Readies. For the boy, Felix, Miss Manning has a delicate sure touch. He is every inch a boy; like a boy he can throw off gross treatment, fawning and incongruity; he can find his own way, he can cherish the little cat and defend him, when at last he is to go back to England he performs prodigies of wiliness in getting the basket, the collar, the lead and the permission. All through this imaginative book run the fresh colours and contrasts of the Palestine of winter and early spring. Miss Manning is getting into her stride; this book is a great advance; she is a professional writer in the highest sense, a conscious artist.

Miss Tey's title comes from an old proverb *Truth is the daughter of Time.* Is it true that Richard III was as black as Shakespeare and the school histories say he was? She thinks not, and I think she makes a good case. But then she also thinks that the Scottish Covenanters were a pack of Brownshirt thugs bent on foisting their own particular brand of intolerance upon the British Isles, and she thinks that the Welsh idea about Tonypandy, and the American idea about the Boston Massacres are also ripe examples of historical bosh and nationalistic myth making. All of which, finding it most agreeable and stimulating—probably true too—prejudices me in her favour. This is not history, however, but a novel: an excellent, odd novel about a police detective, temporarily laid by with a broken leg, sustained in pursuit of duty, who, to while away the hospital days and nights, takes up the case of Richard Plantagenet. Clues fall in to careful research; letters are quoted, records uncovered. Richard did not murder the little princes—why should he have done this and left the other Yorkist heirs alive? And why, if he had murdered them, are there no records of it until twenty years after, when *at the time* it would have been the best card for the usurper Henry to play? And why did Henry, when he took the throne, command that the Act *Titulus Regius* should be suppressed *unread*? And why did the saintly Sir Thomas More write the black things he did about Richard if More did write them—and not his patron Morton? Ah, Morton is the villain of this piece, Morton of Morton's Fork, the sly twister, the mean servant of a mean monarch, the toady and tax collector of Henry (Tudor) VII. Did Shakespeare care tuppence for historical truth? He did not; why should he? He had larger truths to be faithful to. What! Write against the Tudors with a Tudor on the throne and lose your head, and with that head, that genius? He painted Richard black, as he painted Joan black too. This book wins one over; one grows indignant, sick at lies and party-lines, most drawn to Richard, most conscious of England's loss as the Plantagenet heirs fall one by one to vile Welsh tyranny, most conscious, too, of the learned laziness of smug historians who never bother to look things up—or so it seems. This is a light-weight book, but it manages to be rather disturbing as well as very interesting and exciting.

Miss Tey, of course, is also Miss Gordon Daviot.

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